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CONTENTS

EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY: *Page*
Considerations at a Critical Time, by *F. R. Leavis* 162

NEW ENGLISH AND AMERICAN MUSIC, by *W. H. Mellers* 168

CORMAC'S RUINED HOUSE:
A Survey of the Modern Irish Novel, by *D. J. Enright* 180

CHAUCER (II): The Canterbury Tales (I), by *John Speirs* 189

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 212
MORE APOLOGIES AND EXPLANATIONS 212
THE LIBERATIONS OF POETRY, by *F.R.L.* 212
'WE HAVE NOT REACHED CONCLUSION', *Little Gidding,* reviewed by D. W. Harding (p. 216). HOPKINS AND YEATS, *Gerard Manley Hopkins, Priest and Poet,* and *The Development of William Butler Yeats,* reviewed by R. G. Lienhardt (p. 220). 'EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY', *A New Order in English Education* and *The Universities in Transformation,* reviewed by L. C. Knights (p. 225). HARDY AND CRITICISM, *Thomas Hardy (English Men of Letters)* and *Hardy the Novelist,* reviewed by Q. D. Leavis (p. 230). CURRENT PAMPHLETEERING, reviews by Geoffrey Walton (p. 237).

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EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY

CONSIDERATIONS AT A CRITICAL TIME

A TIME when it is agreed on all hands that education is to be a major head in 'post-war reconstruction' is a time when everyone will readily agree that we ought to be keeping fundamentals well in view; and it is also, some of us find depressing occasion to reflect, a time when the most relevant fundamentals look like being left out of account altogether, and receding into oblivion. Of course, at any time in the modern world fundamentals, and essential ends, tend to lose themselves in the procedures that lead—or do not lead—to practice, and in the complications of the machinery:

> Cry cry what shall I cry?
> The first thing to do is to form the committees:
> The consultative councils, the standing committees, select committees and sub-committees.
> One secretary will do for several committees.
> What shall I cry?
> Arthur Edward Cyril Parker is appointed telephone operator
> At a salary of one pound ten a week rising by annual increments of five shillings
> To two pounds ten a week . . .

It is to this tendency that the considerations offered below—they come from the preface of a book as yet unpublished—are particularly addressed: the menacing view of it—or of the general character of the modern world manifested in it—determined the approach and the formulation. And perhaps this tendency, not weakened by war-conditions, may be said to exemplify itself in the recent ruling that puts the universities, as centres of education, into abeyance, so far as men are concerned: the number of men gained for immediate military purposes is proportionately so negligible, the importance of the threatened functions so incalculably great.

However that may be, no one seriously interested in education can see the virtual closing-down of the humanities without a heightening of his worst fears. It is not merely that the schools, deprived in any case of the yearly recruitment, will, when the war ends and 'reconstruction' approaches, be peculiarly in need of young liberally-educated men, coming fresh and keen from the centre (it should be) of light and vigour. The breach of continuity, the abeyance of function at the centre, the source of supply, should itself be thought of as a matter for deep concern. Already for many years the idea

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of a university as a humane focus has had less and less countenance in the actuality. What the actuality is to be now for an indefinite while we know, and it can be too lightly assumed that what we switch off we can switch on again, and that when life is re-started nothing will have been lost but time. And all that we had in the way of 'humane focus' we desperately need in the present.

Current canvassing of the future in education dwells upon the opportunities—the opportunities represented by the 'reconstructive' impetus in company with the solvent and unsettling effects of the war. To say that such opportunities are not merely possibilities of good is no doubt a platitude. But the danger that what passes for a vigorously positive *use* of opportunities will be merely a vigorous swimming with the tide doesn't get the attention it ought. Upheavals like the war tend to accentuate and speed up drifts and developments that have already set in. We are told that the century to come is to be the century of the common man, and we read in papers, books and pamphlets of the changes that are to be made in education in the interests of democracy. Remembering what the claims of democracy have done for education in America, we cannot, some of us, help asking, as we note how the stress falls when these changes are discussed over even the most honoured signatures: 'But what about the interests of education?'

This is certainly a time at which it is not superfluous to develop with some urgency the uneasiness this question expresses, and to suggest that if, in these matters, the essential standards and the essential ends are lost sight of or sacrificed as of merely subordinate importance, democracy will have been ill served and the commonness of the century of the common man will be of an order that it is not exhilarating to contemplate: 'Essential standards' and 'essential ends', of course, are not phrases to which neatly producible definitions can be attached—what they stand for tends the more readily to escape due recognition. And I must add at this point that those of us who share the kind of uneasiness I have referred to find no comfort in the discussions now current of educational reforms that are to be made in the interests of religion.

I do not offer definitions below, but what seems to me more in place: some reminder of the nature of humane tradition, and some account of the way in which education is related to it—or should (I think) be—in the life of the community. I saw no point in trying to re-phrase for the present purpose what I had already relevantly written. The suggestion of a wider context may perhaps be an advantage.

THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY.

'This closeness of connection between the character of a society and the character of its education cannot be too strongly stressed. Schools and colleges are not something apart from the social order to which they belong. They are that order trying to prepare its youth for participation in its own activities. And a

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society can only teach the hopes, the knowledge, the values, the beliefs which it has'.

Alexander Meiklejohn, *The Experimental College*.

Using the same epigraph on another occasion the present writer opened with this commentary:

'If these depressing considerations leave some of us (including Dr. Meiklejohn) still arduously interested in education, it must be because it is still possible to believe that the obvious drift—or drive—of civilization doesn't exhaustively represent "the hopes, the knowledge, the values, the beliefs" of the society to which we belong. And it is in fact in that society conventionally assumed that education should be in some ways concerned with countering certain characteristic tendencies of civilization. Those of us who are not completely pessimistic are committed to believing that this assumption is in some measure justified by a correspondent reality, one which we ought to do our utmost to make more effective.

'In bold moments a complementary proposition to Dr. Meiklejohn's may perhaps be thrown out: namely, that schools and colleges are, or should be, society trying to preserve and develop a continuity of consciousness and a mature directing sense of value—a sense of value informed by a traditional wisdom. Any serious notion of education would seem to invoke both propositions. Their reconciliation in practice, things being as they are to-day, cannot be provided for by any simple formula. A complete and happy reconciliation would clearly involve more than educational reform'.

I indicate here the nature both of the problem that must be faced by anyone to-day who proposes to take education seriously, and of the faith in which he must face it. He will inevitably find himself thinking of the problem as one of resisting the bent of civilization in our time—of trying to move against the stream. But if resistance and counter-movement were all there were to it, the effort would not be worth making. Those who find it worth making must feel it to be the insistence of essential human needs; needs manifested in a certain force of tradition that they, in promoting the effort, represent and are endeavouring, by bringing it to greater consciousness of ends and means and urgencies, to strengthen and direct. In despondent moments they may feel that urgency manifests itself to-day in something like a completeness of unconsciousness, and that it is misleading to speak of any relevant tradition as having force. Nevertheless they have to recognize that, actually, cultural tradition relevant to their aims is active and potent in many ways in the life of the community, and notably in education.

I am concerned in these pages with liberal education at the university level (if something effective cannot be done at that level, it would seem vain to hope much of efforts in education at other levels). The universities are recognized symbols of cultural tradition —of cultural tradition still conceived as a directing force, represent-

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ing a wisdom older than modern civilization and having an authority that should check and control the blind drive onward of material and mechanical development, with its human consequences. The ancient universities are more than symbols; they, at any rate, may fairly be called foci of such a force, capable, by reason of their prestige and their part in the life of the country, of exercising an enormous influence. Much has been compromised there; there too unconsciousness gains—it both spreads and deepens; but they are still in more than form representatives of humane tradition.

'Humane tradition' may seem a vague concept. I don't think that an attempt to define it by an enumeration of its contents would help. It seems to me better to point to English literature, which is unquestionably and producibly 'there', and to suggest that the 'literary tradition' that this unquestionable existence justifies us in speaking of might also be called a vague concept. And the relation of 'literary tradition' to 'human tradition' is plainly not the mere external one of a parallel. Here, it may be said in passing, we have a reason for making a scheme of liberal education centre in the study of English literature. But this is a head to be returned to later. The business at the moment is to suggest in what way a serious effort in education must be conceived as the effort of a cultural tradition at maintaining continuity—or in what way such an effort is conceived to be so in these pages.

For I think it worth insisting on the difference, as I see it, between the present approach and the Humanism of Irving Babbitt. It occurred to me to make the dissociation because Mr. T. S. Eliot, referring at the Malvern Conference (in a complimentary way) to an essay of mine the substance of which is included in this book, used the word 'humanist' in commenting on the approach. The accompanying mention of Irving Babbitt made the bracketing force of the word plain. The difference, I might start by saying, is that whereas Humanism is a doctrine and Irving Babbitt's aim is to state and establish it in general theoretical terms, my own aim is to deal in doctrine, theory and general terms as little as possible. The main concern of these pages is with methods and tactics; these are what, keeping as close as possible to the practical, they offer. Of course, certain assumptions are implied; these are what I am stating now.

I assume that the attempt to establish a real liberal education in this country—to restore in relation to the modern world the idea of liberal education—is worth making because, in spite of all our talk about disintegration and decay, and in spite of what we feel with so much excuse in our many despondent moments, we still have a positive cultural tradition. Its persistence is such that we can, in attempting at an ancient university an experiment in liberal education, count on a sufficient measure of agreement, overt and implicit, about essential values to make it unnecessary to discuss ultimate sanctions, or provide a philosophy, before starting to work. This I assume; and I believe further that what is unnecessary is best avoided. That is, the kind of effort I have in mind would be the effort of an actual living tradition to bring itself to a focus, and

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would see itself—or feel itself—in terms of the carrying-on of a going concern. It may be said that here I am offering theory and doctrine; their drift, then, is that we should deal as much as possible in the concrete, the actual and the particular, and not expend ourselves overmuch on the definition or exploration of values and sanctions in the abstract.

Criticizing Babbitt's Humanism Mr. Eliot says:

> 'It is not at all that Mr. Babbitt has *misunderstood* any of these persons, or that he is not fully acquainted with the civilization out of which they sprang. On the contrary, he knows all about them. It is rather, I think, that in his interest in the messages of individuals—messages conveyed in books—he has tended merely to neglect the conditions. The great men whom he holds up for our admiration and example are torn from their contexts of race, place and time. And in consequence, Mr. Babbitt seems to me to tear himself from his own context'.

Here the difference between Humanism and the approach in question in these pages comes out plainly enough. It is a central aim of Babbitt's Humanism that invites this criticism; the aim of arriving with the aid of (among others) Confucius, Buddha, Socrates and Erasmus at definitions of an ideal Humanism or Humanist. But the business of working out in practice at an ancient English university the means of rehabilitating the function of the 'humanities' involves, as I see it, no such undertaking. It is advisedly that I particularize 'ancient English university': the preoccupation is not with the generalities of philosophical and moral theory and doctrine, but with picking up a continuity; carrying on and fostering the essential life of a time-honoured and powerful institution, in this concrete historical England. And the preoccupation of the students in the contemplated school would not be with this and the other selected exemplar—man or book, 'torn from their contexts of race, place and time'. At the centre of the work, in a way and under conditions to be discussed, would be a study of the literature of their own language and country—the most intimate kind of study, that is, of a concrete tradition. And a study of tradition in literature involves a great deal more than the literary.

Of course, it is the preoccupation with cultural values as human and separable from any particular religious frame or basis, the offer at a cultural regeneration that is not to proceed by way of a religious revival, that prompts the description 'humanist'. Literary criticism must, in this sense, always be humanist; whatever it may end in, it must be humanist in approach, in so far as it is literary criticism and not something else. It seems to me obvious that the approach needed in education must be in the same way humanist. The study of English literature, and not the less so for being controlled by a strict critical discipline, necessarily leads the student, by a variety of approaches, to consider the relation of humane culture to religion, and the place of religion in civilization. The conclusions drawn from such a study may often concur with those expressed by Mr. Eliot

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in his essay on *The Humanism of Irving Babbitt*. Whether or not this is likely to be so for students who haven't started as adherents of a religious creed there is no immediate need to discuss. The point is that, whatever else may be necessary, there must in any case be, to meet the present crisis of civilization, a liberal education that doesn't start with a doctrinal frame, and is not directed at inculcating one. The Christian comments that the culture represented by such an education is incomplete, and for him, perhaps, the frame will always be there. And when he says that the cultural tradition we belong to and must aim to preserve is in very important senses Christian he commands assent. But this is the age, not of Dante or of Herbert, but of T. S. Eliot; and Eliot's genius, which is of the kind that makes a poet profoundly representative, runs to that marvellous creative originality in the use of language because he cannot, for the ordering of his experience in poetry of directly religious preoccupation, make anything like that direct use of a received doctrinal frame or conceptual apparatus which for Dante or Herbert was natural or inevitable—though the aspiration of Eliot's poetry is given in the declared Anglo-Catholicism and classicism of his prose.

In such an age the business of quickening and concentrating into strong conscious life the cultural sensibility in which tradition has its effective continuance (for the nature of the problem answers to this kind of account) will not be forwarded by any proposal that implies conditions at all analogous to those of the age of Dante. The education that will forward the attainment of a real order cannot offer a comprehensive order either as a scheme mapping out and articulating the fields of study in their inevitable relation to a centre of significance, or as a rewarding realization that is to be the goal. The prevailing spirit must be tentative, and if we are to find an analogy with which to suggest the nature of the key-discipline we must go to *Burnt Norton, Coriolan,* and the other poems of that group, rather than to the *Divina Commedia*.[1] Principles, of course, are implied in the measure of tacit agreement—the 'sensibility'—that makes the kind of effort possible, and the discipline would certainly involve exploring them; but to make it a matter of trying to impose in advance the order that can only be expected to emerge in course of time, if things go well with civilization, would be vain.

This, then, is by way of explaining in what sense the present approach is 'humanist', and of suggesting that, if the kind of education proposed may perhaps be judged 'liberal' in more than one sense of the adjective, nevertheless not all of those who insist on the necessity of a religious approach will feel themselves bound to judge that the endeavour after that kind of educational improvement is no matter for active countenance and co-operation.

F. R. LEAVIS.

[1]I explain myself further on this point in *Scrutiny*, Summer, 1942, under the head, *Eliot's Later Poetry*.

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NEW ENGLISH AND AMERICAN MUSIC

SCORES.

EDMUND RUBBRA:

Symphony No. 3 (Boosey and Hawkes, 40/-).
Two Madrigals, Second Set (Winthrop Rogers, 5d. each).
The Dark Night of the Soul, for chorus and small orchestra (Joseph Williams, 1/6).
Five Sonnets from Spenser's *Amoretti* for voice and string quartet (Joseph Williams, 5/-).

MICHAEL TIPPETT:

Fantasia for piano and orchestra (Schott, 5/-).
Piano Sonata (Schott, 7/6).

BENJAMIN BRITTEN:

Sinfonia da Requiem (Boosey and Hawkes, 25/-).
A Hymn for St. Cecilia for S.S.A.T.B. (Winthrop Rogers, 3/6).

GERALD FINZI:

Let us Garlands Bring, Five Shakespeare songs (Boosey and Hawkes, 6/-).

AARON COPLAND:

Piano Sonata (Boosey and Hawkes American edition).

ROY HARRIS:

Piano Quintet (25/-).
Three variations for string quartet (7/6).
Soliloquy and Dance for viola and piano (7/6).
(Schirmer, agents Chapell).

WM. SCHUMAN:

Symphony No. 3 (10/6).
American Festival Overture (7/6).
Newsreel in five shots for band (12/6).
Four Canons, Requiescat, Holiday Song, and Prelude for mixed chorus (2/10d).
(Schirmer, agents Chapell).

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SAMUEL BARBER:

Adagio for strings (10/6).
Overture, The School for Scandal (7/6).
Essay for orchestra (7/6).
Sonata for 'cello and piano (12/6).
Dover Beach for voice and string quartet (5/-).
Re-incarnations for mixed chorus (8d. each).
Three Songs from Joyce's Chamber Music (8/-).
(Schirmer, agents Chapell).

CARLOS CHAVEZ:

Ten Preludes for piano (10/-).
(Schirmer, agents Chapell).

RECORDS.

ROY HARRIS:

Symphony No. 3 played by Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted Koussevitsky (H.M.V., 12/- plus Purchase Tax).

E. J. MOERAN:

Symphony in G Minor, played by Hallé Orchestra, conducted Leslie Heward (H.M.V. under the auspices of the British Council, 24/- plus Purchase Tax).

ALAN RAWSTHORNE:

Four Bagatelles for piano, played by Denis Matthews (twelfth side of above).

BENJAMIN BRITTEN:

Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo, sung by Peter Pears, accompanied Benjamin Britten (H.M.V., 7/3 plus Purchase Tax).

This has been a good quarter for English and American music: and the collation of all the works listed above seems to provide occasion for a few reflections on the musical situation in the English speaking world. In attempting this I will first start from a point of technical procedure as manifested in two English composers and two American; and will then spread outwards to embrace the more general compositional-sociological problems on both this side of the Atlantic and the other. The two English composers I want to start from are Rubbra and Tippett; the two Americans, Copland and Roy Harris.

Rubbra and Tippett, in my opinion the two most distinguished of contemporary British composers, are so completely different in

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outlook that they may be said to symbolize two main alternatives in the evolution of our musical history. Rubbra is almost entirely a textural composer, thinking always (a rare phenomenon nowadays) in terms of the voice and polyphony, who aims to recreate the symphony by absorbing 'shape' into 'texture'; with Tippett, on the other hand, what comes first is the formalizing consciousness, the attempt to establish order out of the multiplicity of experience—or of movements, tonal centres and thematic phrases—and he aims rather at absorbing texture into shape: broadly speaking, the difference in attitude is parallel to that between the fugal Bach and the late work of Beethoven. The lyrically germinating first movement of Rubbra's Fourth—or for that matter the extremely beautiful *The Dark Night of the Soul*—is the clearest possible illustration of what Rubbra meant when, in response to the 'how-do-you-compose?' query, he replied 'I usually begin at the beginning and then go straight on'; and it is a corollary of this attitude that there can for Rubbra be no distinction between texture and composition and (*cf.* Bach) no interest in tone colour *per se*. On the other hand the extremely subtle arrangement of key centres in Tippett's *Fantasia*, the placing of the moods of the variations, of the cadenza, fugue and thematic restatement, make clear that the formalization of the work was the first shape the emotional impetus behind the music assumed, that the figurative detail, even perhaps the actual contour of the themes, were only, as it were, precipitated out of the formalization.[1] In both composers there is an insistence on clarity of line and lucidity of texture but whereas in Rubbra's work there is no distinction at all between texture and composition, in Tippett's work texture is *used* to define the composition. (Significantly Tippett's tonal basis is more diatonic, less fluidly modal and vocal than Rubbra's: compare the fugue of the Fantasia with the fugue at the end of Rubbra's Third). Viewed from this angle I think one can understand why Tippett, potentially a composer of great lyrical power (*cf.* the *Fantasia's* long cantabile variation), should have learned much about the physical stuff of music—the noises instruments make—from Stravinsky; and why the spacing of the parts should in some of his work give an uncanny originality and beauty to passages that look on paper undistinguished. Tippett's interest in the 'shape' structure of the variation, a technique not really congenial to Rubbra despite the lovely variations in the third symphony, is by no means accidental, particularly when one remembers the enormous importance the variation form had for Beethoven

[1]Ernest Newman pointed out how Beethoven's Sketch-books—the clearest example of the workings of the 'formalizing consciousness' known to musical history—reveal how, whereas in Bach 'everything that happens is simply an emanation of the theme', Beethoven conceived the whole structure of a work, particularly its modulations and rhythmic figuration, first, and arrived at the actual themes only at a very advanced stage of the creative process.

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in his final attempts to embrace texture within the formalizing consciousness.[2] It is illuminating to observe, in the work of these two English composers, how the fugal lyrical style of Bach and the formalization of late Beethoven are still the pivots of European musical evolution round which the creative musician revolves in his eternal struggle with the problems of musical speech.

An almost exact parallel to the Rubbra-Tippett contrast is provided by comparing two of the American works listed above—Harris's Symphony and Copland's piano Sonata. Harris's work, which as much as Rubbra's symphonies, might be called a 'gigantic instrumental motet', is continually fluid and (until at least the final fugal dance section) vocal in idiom, even modal in tonality, with its opening lyrical lines of a distinctively plainsong-like contour. The whole work is a germination and blossoming from a melodic seed, the only difference from Rubbra's method being the relative absence of any attempt to reconcile this polyphonic concept with the 'shape' of classical diatonicism and a typically American tendency to rhythmic disintegration in the final fugally treated dance section. (The effect is curiously ambiguous, a kind of mating of the jaunty middle-west dance-hall with the mediaeval hoquet). So completely textural is the symphony that its sections are not so much contrasts as extensions; and it is the rhythmic and tonal freedom of the polyphony which gives the original 'pioneering' temper to harmonies that by themselves might at times seem quite Wagnerian; that rejuvenates, by extremely free 'vocal' dialogues between wind instruments, some passages of characteristically Sibelian cross-rhythmed moto perpetuo; that gives such perky delineation to the six-four three-two opposition of the brusquely 'American' fugal dance.

Harris's symphony and also the very contrapuntal piano quintet, is all linear evolution; Copland's sonata depends essentially on formalization. The melodic ideas, though distinguished, are all brief: the 'composition' lies in the order and balance of the phrases—the pattern made out of them. Texture is here the servant of the integrative process and the spacing (as in Tippett's work and for that matter the final works of Beethoven) and rhythmic articulation are immensely important factors in the composition: one has only to consider the amazing opening to the last movement, a formal integration of material from previous movements very close to the

[2]To the more directly lyrical slow movement Beethoven's characteristic 'prenatal' formalization was less apposite than to the symphonic allegro, and his early interest in the variation form in slow movements may have been largely, as Newman suggests, a means of 'papering over the cracks'—a necessary consequence of his lack of interest in textural evolution: but it became in his late works, I think, one of the chief means whereby he gave his shapes their significant textural rejuvenation and more analogous to the sixteenth century conception of variation than to the Mozartian.

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method—not of course the 'sensibility'—of Beethoven's last works, with comparably hollow and transparent 'scoring'. The whole work, tonally balanced between diatonic consonance and an acute dissonance largely founded on ambiguity between the major and minor triad, 'sounds' superbly (*cf.* Tippett and Stravinsky and Copland's own orchestration), whereas one feels that for Rubbra the tone-qualities are a secondary consideration. With Copland, the process of formalization of course entails the characteristic duality of rhythm which I referred to in writing of him in last April's *Scrutiny*—the agility of the detail, the slowness of the pattern. This is particularly so of the Scherzo, which as it were continually chases its own tail; and ends by biting it off; even the more modal and lyrical slow movement owes its characteristic loneliness and poignancy to the extremely delicate formalization which is given to the various motives—the pattern they make and the spacing of their articulation. However often repeated the phrases do not themselves grow (though the movement does); the emotion precipitates from the design they create. In Harris's work, except briefly in the coda, there is no literal restatement of theme, and with Rubbra repetition is so inseparable from evolution that sonata recapitulation is assimilated into texture.

Fine as is Harris's work at its best, Copland seems to me in toto the more important and authentic composer, and that some integration of their respective tendencies may be possible is suggested by the vital *Third Symphony* of a young pupil of Harris, William Schuman, for although the music's fluidity, bounding lyrical drive and somewhat crude exuberance clearly stem (in a personal way) from Harris, and although the idiom is mainly polyphonic (the movements are Passacaglia and Fugue, Chorale and Toccata), it is quite free from the (however originally used) Wagnerian harmonies that sometimes give Harris's music a Whitmanesque blurring of emotional contour antipathetic to the sharp definition of the most significant American art. Its relatively austere fourth-founded harmonies, and a tendency in the Symphony to curb his youthful efflorescence of invention by a much greater concern for the alternation of mood and sonority through the contrasting sections of a work, unmistakably betray Copland's influence, if they have not his maturity and sophisticated lucidity of articulation; and the orchestration in particular, though still massive, with Harris's sharp opposition between brass, woodwind and strings, has much greater clarity and more effective spacing than in earlier works. As technically Schuman leans from Harris to Copland, so his choral works exhibit explicitly if not very impressively (but one can see the transitional significance which this preoccupation with prose rhythm and hollow counterpoint is having for him) a characteristic which even composers as different as Harris and Copland have in common —the search for the indigenous idiom, the vernacular that will of course be influenced by the vernacular of modern speech. If Schuman's line in the Symphony is less directly vocal than Harris's

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and even, though richer and more fulsome, relatively Hindemithian, the choral works make clear that the abruptness of the tonal transitions (not to mention the more obvious case of the line of the brilliant *American Festival Overture* and the gay *Newsreel Suite* for band) really relate back to American speech, much as the odd tonal transitions of Holst's prose rhythms relate back to his search for an English vernacular: and if Harris's vocalism has hints of plainsong it is more, I think, because of the closeness of plainsong to speech than because of any tendency towards the ecclesiastical—certainly his language is, though sometimes noble in a pioneering fashion, habitually a racy, slangy vernacular which, with its rhythmic complexities and prevalence of fourths, is demonstrably the product of a culture similar to that behind the vigorous vernacular of Copland. Tippett's rhythmic subtlety is also derived from his (originally subconscious) desire to keep his work, however sophisticated, in touch with the vernacular of modern life, which produced jazz; and the recitative in his oratorio *A Child of our Time* is a closer approach to the musical consummation of the true temper of contemporary speech underlying jazz (and commercially blurred by elements of machinistic propaganda), than anything in 'English-speaking' music except the extraordinarily moving 'modern American recitative' of Marc Blitzstein's *No for an Answer*, particularly such numbers as the 'explanatory' character-sketch of Mike: it is illuminating to consider Blitzstein's and Tippett's recitative with reference to the social and indeed economic significance both of the intimate relation between English music and English poetry in the Elizabethan age, and of the failure of the English operatic venture in the seventeenth century. (I'm also inclined to think that Blitzstein's line seems the easier, the more natural, because American speech is more intimately related than English to the evolution of industrial civilization).

Rubbra, thinking in terms of song rather than speech, has never manifested much interest in the problem of the vernacular, perhaps because, being the most clearly traditional of these composers, he has less need to. This is all well and good if, like Rubbra, you're really creative and capable of recreating a tradition that is meaningful for you: but most artists to-day have to steer a wary course between the Scylla of traditions that have hardened into conventions or broadened into eclecticism, and the Charybois of a vernacular that has softened into provinciality. The work of Samuel Barber is a good example of the first type—that of the tradition that is no longer creatively operative; for although his music is always accomplished and elegant, with at times (as in the Adagio for strings) something of a personal fervour, and although his setting of English verse (as represented by the Joyce songs) is exemplary, he has not personality enough to attain to a vernacular adequately expressive of his environment, and so accepts ready-made a late-nineteenth century European tradition which for him is moribund.

In Barber's work the failure to create a vernacular leads to the

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passive acceptance of a dead convention, rendering his music little more than a pleasant academy piece; on the other hand in the work of Gerald Finzi the acceptance of a provincial vernacular leads to the inability to find a tradition of more than local validity. While it would obviously be absurd to complain (since they have such different ends in view) that the line of Finzi's songs, exquisitely moulded and sensitive to the English language as it is, has a less vital contact with contemporary speech than the line of Blitzstein, it is certainly true that its folky inflection carries it so far from present traditions of European music as to render it little more than a dialect; though one must admit that if you want a dialect music you could hardly have a more elegant one than his: (the new Shakespeare songs are however by no means up to the level of his best work, such as *Proud Songsters*). How impossible it is to merge so restricted a dialect either into a vitally contemporary speech or into the main European traditions is revealed clearly in the chaos of E. J. Moeran's Symphony—the lack of adequate formalization and the intermittency of its textural interest—for while this work no doubt contains material for three or four rural elegies of about four minutes each it is as a 'modern' symphony an anachronism. The kind of success that is possible for a contemporary composer in this vein is indicated by the yearning anguish which is given to the first movement's modal, folksong first subject by a sinuous twist of rhythm and tonal centre at the end of the phrase; but it is not the kind of virtue that can be developed to symphonic proportions. This first movement has climaxes in plenty, it stops and starts with no doubt all kinds of thematic inter-relations, but it has no emotional growth because there is a fundamental cleavage between the folksong and Delian elements and the attempt at modernity—a cleavage still more patent in the ostensibly 'tragic' finale with its melodramatic metrical ferocities out of Walton's Symphony, its canon on the brass from Vaughan Williams's Fourth. Potentially the most interesting movement is the lento, which begins well in the Baxian manner, a wild 'celtic' lament with surging strings and chromatically gurgling woodwind; but here again it lacks direction, and it takes Delius at his best to doodle around and get away with it. Nothing could be further from either the concentrated evolution of a lyrical idea in Rubbra's symphonies, or the sharp lucidity of the articulation of the sound pattern in Copland's sonata, than this verbose, opulent, wailing, provincial music. Even if you succeed in being influenced by, rather than parasitic on, Vaughan Williams and Delius (which Moeran by no means always does) they are still too dangerously nostalgic elements to be readily miscible with other attitudes. One sees relatively, how wise Finzi was to restrict himself almost entirely to songs, where the formalization is controlled by the verse structure; and even so fastidious an artist as he fails when in some of the more 'cosmic' Hardy songs he attempts to combine his folksong idiom with a tentative polytonality.

English folksong, unalleviated, is patently not an adequate

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vernacular for a contemporary composer; yet primitive indigenous Mexican music can merge naturally into Carlos Chavez's characteristic contemporary mode of speech, with its clear hard texture, its monotonous repetition and ellipsis of simple diatonic and pentatonic phrases, its steely resonance and occasional strident dissonance over the bases of fourth, fifths and seconds, I suppose because the temper of primitive musics (which popular Mexican Indian music still is) is sufficiently remote from us to be exploited without nostalgia. In particular the rigid repetition of a modal and percussive pattern and the incisive heterophonic two-part writing (hence the prevalence in Chavez of major seconds and sevenths) of aboriginal music can be transformed into a procedure as sophisticated, intellectual and electric as, and analogous to, the pattern-formalization of Copland, though of more limited emotional range. (The restriction may be less obvious in Chavez's unique 'stratospheric' orchestration, but though the keyboard writing is equally original and clearly related to the orchestration, the exquisitely tender pentatonic fourth piece is the only one of these Preludes to give any intimation of a possible contrast of mood such as is presumably necessary in Chavez's large-scale compositions). At the same time, this is authentic music, with real roots, even if they are cactus-roots in a sun-parched desert. Its assurance of manner is brought out by contrast with the incisive Hindemithian piano pieces of Alan Rawsthorne which are very accomplished and yet without personality, an English language or a stable tradition.

In general the position of American composers, from this standpoint of the vernacular and tradition, is both more difficult than that of European composers (because American composers still don't know, and must be continually on the alert as to, where their traditions are going to come out); and easier (because this very uncertainty means that the interaction between vernacular and evolving tradition can be more plastic than in Europe); certainly the work of Copland, Harris, Schuman and Blitzstein is the most rewarding attempt to merge an American vernacular into a stable tradition I've so far come across. On our side, perhaps the clearest expression of the vernacular-tradition problem lies in Tippett's compromise between European wit and grace and English lyricism and waywardness. One gets an idea of his position if one contrasts it first with the real tradition of a Byrd, a Dowland or a Gibbons, which allows you to be simultaneously and unselfconsciously both local and European; and then compares, on the one hand, Tippett's relationship with English folksong with that of Finzi or Moeran, and on the other hand the quality of Tippett's sophistication with the eclecticism of Benjamin Britten.

Whereas Rubbra and Harris almost conceive of texture and composition as synonymous, and Tippett and Copland use texture to define their organization, Britten in many of his works seemed almost to regard texture as an end in itself, apart from line drawing or formalization. One can understand his desire to escape from the

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provinciality of the English vernacular, during the years in which he started composing, to more continental standards (this is not to deny the cultural—and intrinsic—significance of Vaughan Williams), but the assimilation of European tradition to an English sensibility requires a certainty of direction and a creativeness that Britten didn't seem to have. An appeal to continental sophistication cannot excuse melodic material that is inherently undistinguished, and I don't complain of the facility and virtuosity of (say) the piano concerto, only that facility is not facile and ingenuity not ingenious unless the result is interesting music; no more than texture, does technical ingenuity exist in vacuo. I'm all for wit, but I do insist that, as in Tippett's music, the wit should be intrinsic in the melodic sense rather than added by the effects department.

Britten's first big, serious work, the *Sinfonia da Requiem*, seemed to suffer from the same uncertainty of direction. The first movement is an entirely textural affair, germinating from a single stem like the first movement of Rubbra's fourth, exciting and convincing, differing from Rubbra in that the lyrical ideas are relatively insignificant (and of course less vocal) so that the intensity of the music centres directly in the technical virtuosity. The other two movements seemed to me emotionally cheap and parasitic on such unlikely (for a contemporary English composer) nineteenth century sources as Mahler and Fauré, and although talent was undoubtedly required to bring it off so successfully, one couldn't legitimately claim that such eclecticism solves the problem of recovering for the English tradition a European status. Rubbra's original 'austerity' (the epithet seems to have stuck, the critics cottoning to the lack of surface graces rather at the expense of the music's passion) comes nearer to it, not to mention the more conscious attempt of Tippett.

I agree with whoever it was who remarked that the Sinfonia is reminiscent rather of *Citizen Kane* than of a service for the dead: but the talent that is latent in it is certainly more apprehensible in the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* for tenor and piano, a work which leads one to believe that the promise of the very early *A Boy Was Born* may after all yet reach fulfilment. One reason for their success is, I think, the restriction of medium to voice and piano—for exploiting the virtuosic possibilities of the voice amounts more or less to exploiting the inherent resources of melody and is almost ipso facto a step in the direction of tradition. Again the restriction to one type of manners—the Italian baroque line from Monteverde to Puccini—is less dangerous than the eclecticism of the Sinfonia, partly because all the manners are mutually conformable, partly because the Italianate line, perhaps because of its fundamentally vocal nature, has always been a universal of European tradition which crops up without restriction of time and place, so that one accepts it in these songs, if not as easily as one does in Dowland or Purcell, at least with less difficulty than one could accept the French line of the Rimbaud songs, which one couldn't regard as much more than competent genre pieces. Writing as he must without

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'the seventeenth century background,' that seems to me a tribute to the integrity of Britten's personal re-creation of the foreign idiom in this work, and to the sinuous fervour of his line: at the same time he will never evolve a stable idiom merely by the process of reaction, however understandable and (as here) intelligently carried out, and I believe that the greatest service one could do for Britten would be to deplore the ridiculous claims that have been made in some circles for these elegant songs and to say rather that on the evidence of them it seems likely that Britten may one day write songs which rely on no manner other than his (English) own, into which Italianism (and what else) is assimilated; in other words that he will solve the dual problem of creating a valid vernacular from his native language and of reconciling this vernacular with European tradition. Largely homophonic the sonnets aren't textural as are Rubbra's Spenser Sonnets (for an account of which see *Scrutiny* for January, 1942) nor, since the structure is dictated by the words, do they use texture, like Copland and Tippett, in the interests of formalization. But one can say of them that in their more limited sense the texture and spacing of voice and piano part are well-nigh perfect and a joy to listen to—that here the ingenuity of writing is really ingenious because it is beautiful. I suppose it's the alarming copiousness of Britten's output that has made one forget that he's still, compared with most of the composers mentioned in this review, quite young; young enough at least, and potentially talented enough, to be put along with Rubbra and Tippett as a (smaller) reason for feeling relatively sanguine about the future of British music.

One hopes that the period of absorption in vocal technique which Britten appears to be undergoing (it is most lucidly revealed in the settings of sonnets XXX, XXIV and LV, the latter very sensitive in line and with an economical piano part built out of a syncopation and a semitonal dissonance) may prove of crucial importance to him. Further evidence of it is provided by the choral *Hymn to St. Cecilia,* to words of W. H. Auden. Largely homophonic, or in airy dancing counterpoints rather than evolving polyphony, this work is not altogether sustained in interest and much more eclectic than the sonnets. Yet in its very weaknesses the piece has certain advantages over the sonnets; for if its eclecticism patently indicates that Britten hasn't solved the vernacular-tradition problem as cleanly as has Tippett, at least beneath the eclecticism the Hymn remains the product of an English sensibility as the more completely consistent Michelangelo sonnets can hardly be said to. As a whole the music is charming in its diatonic simplicity of outline and sophisticated suavity of detail, and the 'casual as birds' section seems to me almost the most beautiful thing Britten has given us, with a true delicacy and tenderness of spirit poles apart from the facetiousness that in some of his earlier works passed for 'lightness of touch'. The contrast with the pure noble polyphony of Rubbra's madrigals is extreme: Rubbra's entire utterance is texture; Britten's texture is certainly an integral part of his sensibility in this unpre-

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tentious piece, but it entails something that one may without opprobium call 'showmanship'. Again, the music 'sounds' delightfully. Another new, more deliberately popular, choral work of Britten—*A Ceremony of Carols* for women's voices and harp—re-establishes direct contact with the English tradition on which Britten had drawn in *A Boy was Born*. I heard the work in circumstances too unfavourable to warrant my passing judgment on it; but in any case the directness, and the renewed contact, are, I think, significant.

The Copland Sonata, one of the most representative and interesting of his recent works, with a most tenderly beautiful finale, is unfortunately not obtainable in this country. All the other works mentioned above can (and many of them should) be bought. The recording of the Harris is not too good, being harsh on the surface and woolly in the details, and there are one or two awkward passages in the recording of the Britten songs, which are however in general mechanically very satisfactory, and are certainly superbly sung and played. One is so glad to have these records that one would tolerate much worse technical blemishes than these, for I would put the records among the most interesting issues which have appeared since the outbreak of war. May we not now have an English pressing of the American recording of Copland's *Quiet City*? Or of any of his, or Harris's, or Blitzstein's works? The recording of the Moeran Symphony and the Rawsthorne pieces is very good and the symphony is given an exceptionally vital performance under Leslie Heward: Denis Matthews plays the Rawsthorne with impeccable clarity.

At the same time, while no-one wants to discourage the recording of any serious contemporary music and while it is pleasant to have such a fine performance of Moeran's symphony to listen to once in a while, one cannot help asking—not so much because the music is poor as because it is so remote from the significant trends in British music to-day—what possible service to our national culture the British Council imagines it is performing by sponsoring a recording of this work for export as propaganda to our military allies. I do not for a moment suppose there is any policy behind the choice; had it been a deliberate intention to record a work of nostalgic latterday romanticism surely—and I note that Edward Sackville West recently made the same point in the *New Statesman*—one of the symphonies of Bax (preferably No. 3 or 5) would have been musically immeasurably more worth recording, since their idiom, whether one likes it or not, is certainly authentic in a way that makes the amorphous bogey-bogey stuff of Moeran's finale sound like background music to a Hollywood epic about the Nazis, and about as 'modern'. (Besides, Bax has the additional propaganda value of being Master of the King's Musick). It is, however, precisely the absence of policy which is so disquieting and makes this apparently trivial matter worth commenting on at the end of a review of the musical situation in the two English-speaking worlds. How sanguine can one feel about state support for contemporary music (however

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desirable in itself) when we are presented with Moeran's lengthy symphony as an example, presumably, of what British composers can do on their mettle, while there are no recordings of the third and fourth symphonies of Rubbra, of any music of van Dieren, of the larger works of Tippett, Britten or Rawsthorne, or even of the *Pastoral Symphony* and *Job* of Vaughan Williams (without whom Moeran would never have written a note); certainly all these composers except van Dieren could, given the chance, reach a public as wide as Moeran's, probably wider.

There may be many gloomy things about America but at least it takes its composers sufficiently seriously to have recorded almost all the big works of Copland, Harris and Blitzstein as well as a good sprinkling of works by other Americans significant and insignificant; we cannot claim in extenuation that the American works are 'easier' to listen to than most of the English works listed above. Perhaps there's some justification for the feeling tentatively intimated on another occasion in these pages that a certain unreality pervading the relation between composer and audience over here is on the other side of the Atlantic agreeably less evident.

W. H. MELLERS.

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CORMAC'S RUINED HOUSE

A SURVEY OF THE MODERN IRISH NOVEL.

I.

IN his fine book *The Hidden Ireland*[1], Daniel Corkery shows how the Renaissance left Ireland, alone in Europe, almost untouched, for, in his own words, 'whatever of the Renaissance came to Ireland met a culture so ancient, widely-based and well-articulated, that it was received only on sufferance'. The truth of this statement is borne out by the very interesting account Corkery gives of the Gaelic poetry of the eighteenth century. That poetry was as different from the contemporaneous English poetry as it could well be, and in fact we should have to go back to the poetry of Langland and Chaucer to find anything vaguely similar. To take a concrete example, the Jacobite *Aisling* or Vision Poem—obviously (though not closely) comparable with the dream allegory of the *Roman de la Rose* and certainly comparable with nothing in the European eighteenth century—was actually at its peak-point early in that century and did not become extinct till after 1798. And Brian Merriman's (Brian Mac Giolla Meidhre) famous poem *The Midnight Court,* a long animated discussion of marriage having points of resemblance with Chaucer's *Wyf of Bathe,* Dunbar's *Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* and the medieval Courts of Love, was written in 1780, only a few years before the French Revolution and the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*.

We can see what Joyce meant when, in an early squib-pamphlet, he described his country as 'the most belated race in Europe' (he was deploring the fate of the Irish Literary Theatre, presumably its decline into a spate of popular peasant-plays), but had he known more about Gaelic poetry he probably would not have expressed himself quite in those terms, for what really deserved attacking was not so much the absence of the 'modern spirit' in Ireland as the thinness and half-heartedness of that ancient spirit which is what we call the Gaelic Tradition. From the seventeenth century onwards, Ireland had changed only in one way: she had lost touch with her past without forming for herself a present—neither a present which, in Douglas Hyde's words, should be 'a rational continuation of the past', nor a 'present' in the sense one might apply the term to America. The national life was in the hopeless state of being neither one thing nor the other, and that is a fact for which Ireland herself will not take all the blame, or even the greater part.

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[1]*The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (M. H. Gill and Son, Ltd., Dublin, 1925). Daniel Corkery is at present Professor of English at Cork University.

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However, the point I wish to make clear is that during the last three centuries, despite a few outstanding political figures like Daniel O'Connell, Ireland was in a state of petrifaction—and what had been petrified was not anything very impressive—enduring the dead months of her season. And not until quite recently, in fact the early years of the present century, did the national life begin to stir its limbs. Consequently, the last forty years have seen a kind of belated and hesitant Renaissance[2], and its hectic events have found expression in a crop of literary talent which is truly remarkable, though not exactly for its talent. And I think that the Modern Irish Novel deserves a brief consideration because it is precisely here that one can see most explicitly the effect on life and character of that belated and incoherent Renaissance. Old and new have clashed, and the world Irish novelists have to deal with is one pervaded by that clash: their Ireland belongs neither to the Middle Ages which lasted so long there, nor to the modern Europe whose development has been so unnaturally swift. But it hovers uncomfortably between the two, between the old tradition of Catholic Ireland (which, in spite of the 'Celtic Revivalists', is the continuation of the older Gaelic Ireland) and the present 'modern spirit' of Europeanism. Which of these two conditions is preferable is beside the point, but certainly this unique mixture of old and new which constitutes the life of the average Irishman is something almost intolerably painful, something which possesses the stable elements of neither. This, appearing as a bitter and persistent conflict within the individual person, is undoubtedly a very valuable source of material for novelists, but whether they have made the most of it is a different question.

Naturally it is impossible to include all the 'Irish novels' in one category, but nevertheless the kind of struggle I have indicated

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[2]I do not, of course, mean the so-called 'Celtic Renaissance' (Yeats, A. E. etc.), which was really quite irrelevant to Gaelicism. By 'Celtic', these well-intentioned writers and reformers visualized something much too archaic to be revived—Ireland as it was before the arrival of St. Patrick in the fourth century. It would have been quite reasonable had they been content to study the tradition and development of Gaelic literature and life from the earliest extant MSS. to the dying gasps of the eighteenth century—and then to make their deductions from such a study—but unfortunately they felt compelled to rush precipitately back to the very earliest mythologies, to Celtic deities too far removed to have very much national significance. This extremity of patriotism may have been not unconnected with the inability of most of the leading figures to read the Gaelic. One does not rehabilitate a tradition by merely isolating its beginnings and then eulogizing them. And so Yeats and A. E. kicked out not only *Charles O'Malley* and the Stage Irishman, but the Catholic Church and the priests as well. Unfortunately there was then very little left in Ireland except Cromm Cruaich and his twelve sub-gods, and the Dublin Theosophical Lodge.

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is usually, in some guise or other, their main subject, and in a way in which English novelists of the same degree of talent cannot be said to share one main subject. I hope this characteristic will emerge from my inevitably sketchy survey of some of the more notable or notorious writers, and my excuse for inadequate treatment of some of them is that I am concerned not so much with individual peculiarities as with a 'school' of novelists and the ways in which that school seeks to express a country's crisis through the spiritual crisis of its inhabitants. Certainly these novelists are far more interesting as a school than as separate writers.

II.

' . . . the same happy inspiration, one that could hardly fail to beget stories in the mind of anybody prone to narrative—the return of a man to his native land, to its people, to memories hidden for years, forgotten, but which rose suddenly out of the darkness, like water out of the earth when a spring is tapped' : in these hushed tones George Moore speaks of his 'Irish' novel, *The Lake,* which I mention only since Moore is often unfairly attributed to the Irish—. yet another rotten red herring that profanes the Celtic Twilight. The 'happy inspiration' boils down to a few simple Gaelicisms (such as 'Big House' and 'shieling'), an unconscionable deal of wet scenery, a convent, and a Parish Priest. The plot—the priest unconsciously in love with a fallen woman whom he has driven out of his parish—is just what one would expect from the Latin Quarter mentality which laboured over those tediously pornographic *Memoirs of My Dead Life* (of which a sceptical Irishwoman said, 'Other men kiss but don't tell, while Moore tells but doesn't kiss'). Moore renounced the delights of Paris (or was it London?) to rally to the admirable men, who, disgusted with the terrible silence into which the Gaelic Courts of Poetry of the eighteenth century had expired, sought to produce a literature that should really be of and for Irish Ireland. In *Hail and Farewell,* Moore tells us how the fate of the Irish language hung in the balance while he deliberated whether or not to make it immortal with a novel: it is to be regretted that he found the Gaelic rather too coarse for his liking (one couldn't make love in it)—he even had to write his *Diarmuid and Grania* in French. Confronted with such a Montmartrian vision, poor bedraggled Kathleen ni Houlihan could hardly be blamed for her attitude of suspicion, and when the fact was borne upon him that the idea really was a Celtic Revival and not a George Moore Benefit, he soon hurried back to his continental frivolities, consoling himself that the grapes were not only sour but non-existent as well. He wrote to a friend: 'I have completely renounced my Celtic hopes. Of the race there is now nothing but an end left over, a tattered rag, with plenty of fleas on it'.

Worthless though *The Lake* is, it does indicate, in an uncharacteristic aspect, what is the most obvious manifestation of the pseudo-renaissance I spoke of, and what is therefore the main theme of the Irish novelists. This is, of course, the 'religious problem'. Not the

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time-honoured strife between Protestant and Catholic, North and South (though this does occur), but now the more fundamental clash between the traditional religious teaching and modern 'free-thinking' in one or other of its forms. The wheel has come full circle, and once more we have the old controversy—Oisin, the pagan, and St. Patrick, the Christian proselytizer—but now the tide of battle (among the novelists, at least) turns, though hesitantly, in the opposite direction. In the Ossianic poems, Oisin and St. Patrick are ideal symbols and usually both give of their best. But when we turn to the contemporary Arguments the corresponding antagonists are far from ideal. 'Patrick of the crooked crozier', the virile and competent missionary, gives place to a narrow and unsophisticated Church whose infallibility is not invariably reflected in its priests ('The Church is divine, She even survives the clergy'), and on the other hand the nostalgic Oisin, the noble pagan, gives way to a generally unimpressive unorthodoxy, ranging from the incoherent tremblings of doubt to the mud-and-bloodiness of such as Liam O'Flaherty.

But before I deal with the novelists who are seriously engaged with this rebellion against traditional religion, there is one small matter to be disposed of. L. A. G. Strong's well-known and possibly best novel, *The Garden*, is typical of a whole stratum of mediocre literature. In short, it is one of that common class of 'superior' and wordy novels with serious intentions and no accomplishments. Being largely a story about a child, it provides an opening for a discussion on this point which is relevant both to some of these Irish novels and to a good deal of English library fiction. The difficulty of the 'child-hero' problem lies in the commonplace that many events and objects that may have no significance for the adult do have a genuine if transitory significance for the child. How, then, is the novelist to write a book about the child which will really interest the adult who is going to read it? The heaping-up of minor details which we have in Strong's novel and in most similar books is plain boring, and it is interesting to compare this sort of thing with the World's Classics translation of Aksakoff's *Years of Childhood* and *A Russian Schoolboy*. These books, part of a Russian autobiography, are not especially remarkable, but Aksakoff does write about the *child* Aksakoff as the *adult* Aksakoff can appreciate him, selecting what time has shown to be really of permanent importance, and knowing it to be so by knowing himself as he was when he wrote the book. I do not mean that Aksakoff keeps commenting on his narrative—'this made me that'—he certainly does not. The story is written quite objectively, just as it happened, with only as much comment on it as existed at the time in the child's mind. But Aksakoff's selective ability is implicit in the very narrative itself. Clearly it is no use simply living in the child one is representing—one must first of all live in the man one *is*, and through the man to the child.

The child-character is popular in Irish novels: for instance, parts of Seán O'Faoláin's *A Nest of Simple Folk*, and of Frank O'Connor's *Dutch Interior*, and Conal O'Riordan's *Adam of Dublin*

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(which I thought quite good—particularly the parts about the various priests and such local colour as the Abbey Theatre episode—and infinitely superior to the ghastly sentimental-cum-melodramatic *Soldier of Waterloo*). And its great advantage is that the novelist can simply describe what is going on around the child—paint an easy wash of that agonized atmosphere of the Troubles, political and religious—without having to apply himself seriously to the problem. The child is only obscurely aware of the struggle he is growing up within, and since naturally he is in no position to make up his mind or to have much serious feeling about it, therefore the writer can place himself on just the same footing—the 'innocent eye' of the child is very disingenuously employed to mask the inadequate mind of the man. But this is a digression which neither relevance nor space will permit.

The three 'younger hopes' of Irish literature are the novelists Seán O'Faoláin, Frank O'Connor, and Francis Stuart. Whatever their ranks, O'Faoláin and O'Connor are serious writers, but how Stuart crept in is difficult to say[3]. Presumably it was due to Yeats's ridiculously high estimate of his work (presumably due, in turn, to Mr. Stuart's liberal use, in and out of quotation marks, of Yeats's poetry). Francis Stuart has made no contribution to the literature of that kind of struggle I am concerned with—having risen far above such trivialities—but his contribution to the cess-pool of 'mystical' messiness is far from inconsiderable. *Try the Sky* (in the foreword to which Compton MacKenzie writes, 'I suggest that Francis Stuart has a message for the modern world of infinitely greater importance than anything offered by D. H. Lawrence') is really the maximum mush, all about Old Mother Earth, a continental quasi-Goddess (very amoral, very romantic), and a quasi-Indian Princess called Buttercup, who curiously enough is half a beast (see Lawrence) and half a wave (see Yeats). I hasten to mention that *Try the Sky* is in no way about Ireland or the Irish (except that the 'narrator' of the story happens to be an Irish youth who had been better employed earthing-up his potatoes). But Stuart's well-known 'Irish' novel, *The White Hare*—a revolting mixture of treacle and sherbet, something like Yeats's Noble Women posing for a psycho-analyst—is only a little less nauseating.

Frank O'Connor's *Dutch Interior* (his second novel) is a typical example of the better Irish novel, but it is not a very satisfactory novel. It contains all the types, the 'Characters', of the spiritual crisis in question—the sceptic, the orthodox, the in-between, the Irish-American sentimentalist, and so on (I begin to think we shall soon have another kind of Stage Irishman, slightly better-class but not much of an improvement on the old one). He paints a very depressing and inconclusive picture of the modern Irish tension, that

[3]Francis Stuart has now joined up with Pound and Wodehouse and is broadcasting Pan-Celticism under the auspices of the Nazi Party. Except that one would not have thought Mr. Stuart interested in Celticism, this is not surprising.

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grappling of a vaguely-realized and elementary European culture with the rather provincial brand of Catholicism so firmly grounded in Ireland. For here the tension is only the tension of a corpse strung on the gallows. Everyone is frustrated: and it is that Tchehovian frustration which is the antithesis of tragedy—failure in ambitions that were never clearly apprehended, that indeed never existed except side by side with the sense of their failure. Here the 'struggle' is a foregone conclusion; the quiet dream-like descriptions, rather reminiscent of Virginia Woolf, confirm this impression.

But Seán O'Faoláin's *Bird Alone* is, I think, a remarkably good novel—far and away the best I have mentioned so far—and that which best illustrates my thesis. The story is of a young man's struggle against a Church that is too securely founded, his fight for freedom of thought and action—a freedom which costs him all he was living for and leaves him *'liber inter mortuos*—a freeman among the dead'. It is a kind of local *Crime and Punishment,* without the reconciliation that Raskolnikov is finally able to effect. O'Faoláin does not damn his hero *ipso facto,* nor does he damn the victorious Catholic-social conventions: he depicts without prejudice a straight, if hardly fair, fight, and though his hero's 'individualism' culminates in something approaching murder (he is in love with a sincerely religious girl whose sense of sin drives her to suicide), he does not forfeit our sympathy and respect. This novel, too, might be charged with inconclusiveness, in that the hero's life is ruined beyond repair yet he does not in any way repent his actions. Had he made a success of his 'freedom' or had he absolutely renounced it, the case would have been different: but he is simply an ordinary young man, unusual only in his smatterings of culture, and not intended to be a Prometheus or a Faust. But O'Faoláin has a clear grasp of the moral essentials of his story, and there is nothing stiff or sentimental about his attitude to tradition and the contemporary mentality. The same author's *A Nest of Simple Folk* is another tale of Troubles and troubles, sadly complicated, and nothing like as impressive as *Bird Alone.*

To end this section, I should like to mention O'Faoláin's interesting biography of De Valera (in *Penguin*)— De Valera is certainly the first powerful Irish leader to have any conception of how to steer his country between the Scylla of the Twentieth Century and the Charybdis of the Middle Ages—and Frank O'Connor's translations of Gaelic poems, *The Fountain of Magic,* of which the few I have read were very attractive. Both these writers fought in De Valera's I.R.A., just as their literary predecessors had taken part in the 1916 Rising.

III.

Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a very relevant sequel to *Bird Alone,* for here the rebel is more considerable (as a rebel) than the rebel of O'Faoláin's book. Stephen is an artist in the making, while Corny is just a more or less average intelligent young man. Not that there is anything very striking about Stephen's

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qualities and attitudes as they appear in *Portrait of the Artist*—When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets', and so on—for the novel is no more than its title announces. Stephen's art is intangible and dim and not very remarkable. It is rather like the æsthetics of the young Yeats: 'his father's whistle, his mother's mutterings, the screech of an unseen maniac were to him now so many voices offending and threatening to humble the pride of his youth' belongs to the 'all things uncomely and broken' genre, which is only the beginnings of the artist's development and no more than the germ (the *Chamber Music* and *Pomes Penyeach*) out of which something important may or may not grow. Stephen writes Swinburnian verses and dreams of 'the girls and women in the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann', and this is all we have in the way of evidence from which to deduce Stephen's future as an artist—a deduction which will help to decide, among other things, whether or no the sacrifices he has made (notably, of his mother) can be justified. And Stephen leaves us with the words, 'Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race'. But it is in character that the precise meaning of this ambition is obscure: he can hardly mean the *Irish* race, since he is not interested in it as it is ('Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow') and neither has he the 'Celtic Revivalist's' enthusiasm for the race as it ought to be. If he means the *human* race (more comprehensible in a cosmopolitan artist), his words are somewhat presumptuous. Joyce gives us no help here ('his thinking was a dusk of doubts and self-mistrust, lit up at moments by the lightnings of intuition'—but do *we* really perceive these lightnings?), and neither does *Ulysses* carry us much further. It is really Stephen's own conscience that he needs to forge—a conscience, as an artist and as a man, which, though divorced from the religious teaching of his youth, shall genuinely deserve the name.

This reminds me of a remark made by some Irish writer about what he called the Novel of Conscience. He was deploring the fact that the Irish have not managed, in spite of their obvious qualifications, to produce something in the line of the novel of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, and he quoted *Ulysses* as being the nearest approach to, though not the fufilment of, his desideratum . It may be that Irish writers have not succeeded in the Novel of Conscience because they have had only too much opportunity to charge up their spiritual distresses to England's account (which, if easily sympathised with in the people, is deplorable in the writer).

But it is useful to compare *Ulysses* with Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in just one respect (not, of course, to attempt to weigh one against the other). For a comparative consideration of the delineation of character of Bloom and Dedalus on the one hand, and Pierre Bezukhov on the other, may help to indicate a possible line of criticism of Joyce's novel—perhaps the only serious line.

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The spiritual crises of Bezukhov (as of Levin, in *Anna Karenina*) are presented, traditionally, as *art*. That is, there is a certain conciseness of treatment even when what is being treated is in itself something inconcise. In the trite aphorism, there is 'order in chaos'—a clearness and comparative brevity is imparted to more or less obscure and drawn-out psychological processes, and though these qualities are unnatural in that a 'real-life' Bezukhov could never himself have had such a lucid (if agonized) view of his own breakdown and recovery, yet they are, in a work of art, quite natural and right: art being the precipitate or analysis or ordering of experience, and not experience itself. This is commonplace enough, but I do not wish to imply that the literary artist should confine himself to clear-cut syllogisms, to a kind of novel whose scheme would be a chapter in Black, a chapter in White, and a cunning conclusion in Grey. But the advantage *War and Peace* seems to me to have over *Ulysses* is just this kind of conciseness and clearness. One is aware, of course, that Joyce's intention was altogether different from Tolstoy's: he is out to express life more completely in terms of life, chaos in terms of chaos[4] (not completely, there are significant motifs like that of 'the fox burying his grandmother under a hollybush')—his canon is, in spite of the fantasms of the Night-town scene, realism *ad nauseam*[5], and the nauseation lies in his very success, in the very subtlety of his technical apparatus.

The kind of superiority that the psychological analysis of *War and Peace* displays over that of *Ulysses* is rather similar to the superiority of *Part I* of Goethe's *Faust* over *Part II*. For despite the obvious differences, *Ulysses* and *Faust, Part II* are comparable in this one respect: in both an essentially simple, if profound, purpose (the microcosm in the macrocosm) is obscured by an excess of illustration. In *Ulysses* it is too much of the 'common round', and in *Faust, Part II* it is too much of a most uncommon symbolism. Consequently: just as at the end of *Faust* we cannot gauge Faust's spiritual condition from all the masses of material we have been

[4]The fact of the Homeric parallel and that a human organ and science or art is buried in each section is not relevant here.

[5]I am not here referring to the insistence on the seamy-side of Dublin life and human character. The only possible objection of this nature would have to be expressed something like this: it is not so much that Joyce over-emphasizes the lower instincts of humanity ('olla putrida'), as that he under-emphasizes the 'higher motives', the 'positive emotions' or whatever one chooses to call them. For while both Bloom and Dedalus are proficient in their lusts and hatreds, they both tend to slip into vagueness when confronted with the opposing sets of values and emotions: Dedalus becomes cynical and mistrusting, and Bloom becomes sentimental. Thus the evolution of the postulated Novel of Conscience is prohibited. But whether one considers this lack of balance just (*i.e.* genuine realism) depends on one's estimate of human nature.

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presented with (the Masquerade, the Journey to the *Mothers*, the Classical Walpurgis Night, the Helen episode, etc.)—the angels tell us that 'the noble scion of the Spirit-world is freed from evil', but this is not the same thing at all—so, at the end of *Ulysses*, we are left on similarly shifting ground. Edmund Wilson's reading left him saying, 'It is possible that Molly and Bloom, as a result of Bloom's meeting with Stephen, will resume normal marital relations', and this is a very sensitive and intelligent response—but it is only a possibility, and there are other possibilities not less convincing. I cannot but feel that this indefiniteness (of which Joyce himself was well aware) is a blemish which cannot be lightly waved aside.

After *Ulysses* there is little more to be said about the Irish Novel.

As Daniel Corkery shows, Gaelic literature was always a matter of schools rather than of individuals; that poetry was academic in the best possible sense: a solid foundation of honest average talent (for poetry was a profession and not a hobby) topped with a number of outstanding poets who would probably not have existed except for that academic sub-structure, and whose particular excellences derived directly from it. This stability was lost to the literature of Ireland even before it disappeared from that of England, and this curiously delayed 'renaissance', this painful impingement of modern on traditional, is hardly calculated to effect an immediate restoration. Prophecy is out of the question, but it is certain that Eire's national-spiritual struggle is just as bitter as that of countries whose fate is more spectacularly precarious.

And I hope I have shown how these novelists are interesting documentarily, not as individual artists, but as a 'school' which is, however incompetently, concerned with this struggle—a sub-structure of 'academic literature' which so far has produced, on the site of 'Cormac's ruined house', few turrets.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

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CHAUCER (II):

THE CANTERBURY TALES (I)

IN the *Divine Comedy* states of perdition and deprivation at one extreme, and the evil of human nature, of Dante's Italy in particular, and of the world in general, all the grades of being in between, and, at the other extreme, the higher and highest possibilities and states of beatitude, are placed and apprehended. In the *Canterbury Prologue* and *Tales* the human order, as it actually existed, with all its deficiencies, in England at Chaucer's moment is more singly—more fragmentarily perhaps—the object of contemplation. What has struck readers of the *Canterbury Prologue* and *Tales*—readers so different as Dryden and Blake—is the variety of the human world they mirror. But, as Blake alone perhaps seems to perceive ('They are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life') this surface variety has its corresponding depth. Chaucer is in a seemingly modern way so realistic in his foreground and at the same time so humane that, reading superficially we are apt to miss the depth of difference behind. But the richness of significance of that foreground is lent it from the unfamiliar depth. By the time the best of the *Canterbury Tales* were composed Chaucer had behind him long years of poetic practice. The accomplishment—so 'seemingly unstudied' as Coleridge remarked—of the versification is sufficient proof of that. But that technical mastery was already remarkable in *Troilus and Criseyde* and indeed was achieved at a very early stage. The depth, the ripeness of the *Prologue* and the best of the *Tales*, is more than a thing of the maximum technical accomplishment but is a depth of acquired meaning and achieved understanding. Habits of mind, ways of feeling—a whole way of life different from our own—by comparison with which our own seems to many crude and unsatisfactory—goes to the composing of that Chaucerian depth.

The simplifications of religious feeling distinguish a number of the *Tales*. Most of these are probably among the earliest in date of composition—but it is never safe to feel sure about this—and later inserted into the framework of the *Canterbury Tales* to relate it to the religious occasion that the Pilgrimage officially was. They are so 'un-modern' (that may partly account for their charm for us) that they in this respect also contrast with the maturest of the *Tales*

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and with the *Prologue*. Such phrases—of a singularly tender and haunting beauty—as these from the *A.B.C.*, a probably early translation outside the Canterbury framework:

> And bringest him out of the crooked strete . . .
> And ledest us in-to the hye tour . . .

are nearer such phrases as these from the *Man of Lawe's Tale*:

> The whyte lamb, that hurt was with the spere . . .
>
> The child stood, loking in the kinges face . . .

than either seems to be to anything in the *Prologue, The Nonne Prestes Tale, The Wyf of Bath's Prologue, The Pardoneres Tale, The Marchantes Tale.* Yet the complexity and subtlety of these latter, which are exactly those which *seem* most 'modern' to us, is found on analysis to be composed of elements which are just as 'un-modern'. As we dig down through the successive levels of these we come again upon their quite 'un-modern' foundations of allegory and personification by which their complex meaning is sustained.

The *Prioresses Tale*, unlike the *Seconde Nonnes*, the *Man of Lawe's*, the *Clerkes* and the *Monkes*, seems to have been specially composed for its *persona*, but though dramatically and otherwise robuster than these close translations and adaptations it is like them in that it belongs for us to an unescapably different world—less of dogmatic intellectual belief, however, than of Catholic folk-belief that was half superstitious credulity and naïve wonder; the gaping crowd confront the miracle of the Virgin. The humanity of Chaucer's—the Prioresse's—appreciation of the 'litel clergeon' and his 'prymer' further substantialises the Tale, his daily progress to and from school, the 'povre widwe' waiting vainly with a mother's anxious distress for the child's return. But the repetition in the child's mouth of the 'O Alma redemptoris'—of the meaning of the Latin the child, like the folk, is innocent—sustains to the miraculous climax a quite *other* note of religious exaltation caught from the choir-singing of the church services:

> Twyes a day it passed thurgh his throte,
> To scoleward and homward whan he wente.

The child has acquired the passivity—'it passed thurgh his throte'—of an instrument or vehicle of the divinity. There is further an exaggerated folk-rumour horror about a child-murder having taken place up an alley that is curiously combined with the naïve religious ecstasy. And combined with the miraculousness there is a curiously physical element:

> Ther he with throte y-corven lay upright,
> He 'Alma redemptoris' gan to singe
> So loude, that al the place gan to ringe . . .

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This holy monk, this abbot, him mene I,
Him tonge out-caughte, and took a-wey the greyn,
And he yaf up the goost ful softely . . .

Something like this earthly-unearthly or other-earthly note—'there is better life in other place'—occurs again in the *Seconde Nonnes Tale* of Seinte Cecile; where it is more exactly perhaps sensual super-sensual in quality.

An angel:

I have an angel which that loveth me

has brought Cecile and Valerian roses and lilies from Paradise. Tiburce, Valerian's brother, speaks:

. . . 'I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,
Whennes that sote savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer . . .
The sote smel that in myn herte I finde
Hath chaunged me al in another kinde'.

There is the beautiful and profound metaphysical recognition:

Tiburce answerde, 'seistow this to me
In soothnesse, or in dreem I herkne this?'
'In dremes', quod Valerian, 'han we be
Unto this tyme, brother myn, y-wis.
But now at erst in trouthe our dwelling is'.

But having less of the backbone of folkiness than the *Prioresses Tale,* this Tale is more a bookish product; the sweet savour of roses and lilies of Paradise seems a little sickly; its *persona* is appropriately an uncharacterized nun.

The *Man of Lawe's Tale* of Constance is rather more satisfying, in spite of its inordinate diffusion, because, being a tale of moment to all Christendom as opposed to all Heathendom, it is less private. Constance is compelled not only to leave parents and those with whom she has been brought up for strangers and an unknown husband, but also to leave Christian land for a barbarous nation and to come under the spells of a 'sowdanesse, rote of iniquitee'. The tale is evidently a tale of Christian constancy—Constance is in the first instance a personification; it manifests, besides the preservation of innocence by God's power in the midst of darkness, solitude, evil and death. The allusions to past miracles (*exempla*) of divine intervention (lines 470-490):

Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave . . .
Who kept hir fro the drenching in the see . . .

condense and accumulate the strength of religious feeling behind the

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theme. In association with this supernatural, superterrestrial element there is the overflowing fountain of tenderness enveloping, as frequently in Chaucer, the child image—here the double image of mother and child:

> Hir litel child lay weping in hir arm,
> And kneling, pitously to him she seyde,
> 'Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee non harm'.
> With that hir kerchef of hir heed she breyde,
> And over his litel yen she it leyde;
> And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,
> And in-to heven hir eyn up she caste.

This feeling evidently originates in, and derives its quality from the mediaeval worship of Mary and the child Christ.

> In him triste I, and in his moder dere,
> That is to me my seyl and eek my stere . . .

There is a corresponding feeling about Griselda and her child in the *Clerkes Tale*—particularly when the child is threatened by the monstrous brutality of man in the huge male person of the sergeant. In this passage explicitly religious associations, those of the Crucifixion, appear:

> But, sith I thee have marked with the croys,
> Of thilke fader blessed mote thou be,
> That for us deyde up-on a croys of tree.

The grotesqueness, to the modern mind, of the *Clerkes Tale*, a translation of Petrarch's Latin version of the tale of Griselda, largely disappears once we recognize that Griselda is not a completely human character at all, and should not be judged as such, but is again a kind of personification or, in this case, a type of wifely obedience and patience. As we see her first she is a type of daughterly perfection which merges into her assumption, and typification throughout the tale, of wifely perfection to the extremity of the violence that is done to her perfection as a mother; for if, by her incredible yielding up of her son, she continues the perfect image of the obedient wife it is at the expense of having become a very imperfect image of a mother. The tale of her sufferings, borne by her with a more than human passivity and resignation, seems to have some kind of further, more generalized significance, as that of Constance has also, as an allegory of the disciplinary trials of the soul.

Griselda, then, is both human and non-human. She is lent human substance as a peasant girl.

> And in greet reverence and charitee
> Hir olde povre fader fostred she;

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A fewe sheep spinning on feeld she kepte,
She wolde noght been ydel til she slepte.

And whan she hoomward cam, she wolde bringe
Wortes or othere herbes tymes ofte,
The whiche she shredde and seeth for hir livinge,
And made hir bed ful harde and no-thing softe.

But she and the village folk, with their beasts, are translated to a spiritual plane by the Christian idea of the blessedness of poverty and of labour performed 'in reverence and charitee' (compare the Plowman of the *Prologue*). The apparent contradiction between 'th' erthe yaf hem habundance' and 'povre folk' is perhaps explainable in this context in terms of God's providing the fruits of the earth for His children as for the birds and beasts. The religious overtones of the poetry arise from remote but perceptible Biblical allusions.

And as she wolde over hir threshfold goon,
The markis cam and gan hir for to calle;
And she set doun hir water-pot anoon,
Bisyde the threshfold, in an oxes stalle,
And doun up-on hir knees she gan to falle,
And with sad contenance kneleth stille
Til she had herd what was the lordes wille.

The 'oxes stalle', taking up the resonance from previous lines (206):

But hye god som tyme senden can
His grace in-to a litel oxes stalle

half-consciously recalls the manger in which the infant Christ was laid. The 'markis' calling the peasant girl half seems God calling the soul; and her act of obeisance to her feudal lord:

And doun up-on hir knees she gan to falle

—seems rather an act of worship. In such a context the water-pot (*cf.* 220, To fechen water at a welle is went) again dimly awakens Biblical virgin-at-the-well associations. The pomp of the marriage that follows owes some of its significance to the suggestion of the soul's espousals. Such an interpretation of the *Clerkes Tale* as having grown out of religious allegory should not be pressed too far. But the peculiar tenderness of the feeling cannot wholly be explained by the partially grotesque facts of the *human* story pitiful as these are.

Chaucer's version of the Hugolino story in the *Monkes Tale* is again not without traces of the religious feeling, if not the idea, which governed its occurrence as an episode in the *Divine Comedy*. The pity which in the *Divine Comedy*, as an element of that ordered

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context, ultimately resolves the horror of the episode seems to suffuse, as a partially detached self-contained feeling, Chaucer's version, dissolving away the original horror. The children, in Chaucer's version, are childish, thus touching the gentler feelings.

> The eldeste scarsly fyf yeer was of age.
> Allas, fortune! it was greet crueltee
> Swiche briddes for to putte in swiche a cage!

The metaphor associates them with what is small, helpless, innocent and pitiable.

> And on a day bifil that, in that hour,
> Whan that his mete wont was to be broght,
> The gayler shette the dores of the tour.
> He herde it wel,—but he ne spak right noght,
> And in his herte anon ther fil a thoght,
> That they for hunger wolde doon him dyen.

Following the sudden shock of this agonized recognition comes the gentler pathos of the common humanity of the child hungry for its 'potage' and the father's helplessness to relieve its hunger. (This is wholly Chaucer's addition).

> His yonge sone, that three yeer was of age,
> Un-to him seyde, 'fader, why do ye wepe?
> Whan wol the gayler bringen our potage,
> Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?
> I am so hungry that I may nat slepe'.

The child, through the extremity of its suffering, begins to pass beyond the normal child consciousness:

> Now wolde god that I mighte slepen ever;
> Than sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe

hunger being, moreover, imaged as a kind of beast that creeps into the 'wombe'. The child's simple acceptance of death, described with Chaucerian, un-Elizabethan absence of fuss:

> Til in his fadres barme adoun it lay,
> And seyde, 'far-wel, fader, I moot dye'.
> And kiste his fader, and deyde the same day

contrasts with the animal-like action of the distraught father:

> For wo his armes two he gan to byte.

But finally the horrible and repulsive is transformed into the sublimely pathetic when the two surviving children touchingly mis-

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understand that action and their love expresses itself in a sacrificial offer that would be grotesque if it did not recall the sacraments of religion:

> His children wende that it for hunger was
> That he his armes gnow, and nat for wo,
> And seyde, 'fader, do nat so, allas!
> But rather eet the flesh upon us two;
> Our flesh thou yaf us, tak our flesh us fro'.

As in the other tales it is the mother and son, in this it is the father and his sons in the tower who form what are felt as partially symbolic images.

Yet these poems for all their unique and touching beauty are too slight to possess that profounder seriousness which Arnold missed in Chaucer when he compared him with Dante, Homer, and Shakespeare—and even perhaps with Milton and Wordsworth. That profounder seriousness is to be discovered, where perhaps Arnold least thought of looking for it, at the basis of the great *Prologue* itself, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue,* the *Nonne Preestes Tale,* the *Marchantes Tale,* and some others of the maturest, and wisest, of the *Canterbury Tales*. These Arnold no doubt relegated to the inferior category of the 'comic'. But *Don Juan* (to take an example nearly contemporary with Arnold himself) is, at bottom, more *serious* than any other poem of the early 19th century with the exception perhaps of the *Prelude* and some other poems of Wordsworth, the *Induction* to the revised *Hyperion* and, possibly, the *Mask of Anarchy*. (See F. R. Leavis's *Revaluation*)..

Chaucer's poetic 'criticism of life' is to be met with at its most serious in the ecclesiastical 'characters' of the *Prologue*. The subtlest of these, that in which a most delicately poised irony is apprehensible, is the Prioresse.

> That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy;
> Hir gretteste ooth was but by sëynt Loy;
> And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
> Ful wel she song the service divyne,
> Entuned in hir nose ful semely . . .

Already the 'coy smyling' suggests rather a young girl in the presence of young men than a prioress. Englentyne, also, is a little unexpected as a name for a prioress. Whether Madame Englentyne's singing is to be judged as a social accomplishment or the devout performance of a religious office we may as yet be unable to decide; but, whichever way we regard it, the ludicrous image—'entuned in hir nose'—discomposes the propriety, upsets the decorum, here and in subsequent repetition represented by 'semely'.

> At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;
> She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,

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Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.
In curteisye was set ful muche hir lest.
Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,
That in hir coppe was no ferthing sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte . . .

Her table manners not only show that she has been genteelly brought up but are unexpectedly important, their daintiness and nicety over-elaborated, in one dedicated to the rigour and severity of the religious life.

And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,
And peyned hir to countrefete chere
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence . . .

Her anxiety 'to ben holden digne of reverence' by affectation of courtly manners rather than by holiness of life confirms the underlying note of frivolous vanity. Her way of life conforms less to a religious ideal than to an ideal of good manners.

But, for to speken of hir conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde
With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte:
And al was conscience and tendre herte . . .

'Conscience' turns out in her case to mean not, as we should expect in a prioress, the religious conscience but an effusion of tender feelings, sentimental because neither directed towards the most appropriate objects—the poor, the hungry, the sick and the suffering—nor proportionate to its objects—mice and small dogs. Her tenderness and care, excellent in a prioress if directed where the need is the greatest, are somewhat perversely lavished on pet dogs, fed daintily and expensively.

Ful semely hir wimpel pinched was;
Hir nose tretys; hir eyen grye as glas;
Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war.

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Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene;
And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene,
Of which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after, AMOR VINCIT OMNIA.

The clear visualization—which has come of long practice in personification—presents us an elegant lady rather than a nun. This gradually built up ambiguity—furthered by the contrast between that mouth and that forehead—culminates in the final ambiguity of the AMOR VINCIT OMNIA. Amor ought, in the case of a prioress, to mean AMOR DEI, but this prioress is sufficiently a lady of the world and a sentimentalist, for a doubt to exist as to whether in her case the divine or the profane love is the appropriate reference. Her *Tale*—if, as I have ventured to think, it was composed for her as its *persona*—reveals the deeper instinctive humanity of the nun ('modres love in her breste enclosed') and sheds a pitiful light on her care for mice and small dogs.

In the 'character' of the Monk the irony is founded on a corresponding, if less ambiguous, contrast between his grosser worldliness and sacred profession.

An out-rydere, that lovede venerye;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;
And, whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here
Ginglen in a whistling wind as clere,
And eek as loude as dooth the chapel-belle . . .

The quality of his 'manliness' very soon defines itself as incompatible with the spirituality demanded of a monk.

The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,
This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the space . . .

This particular kind of 'modernity' is not unfamiliar or novel in any age. Whether or not 'his opinioun was good' (and the context seems to me to justify us in assuming an element of mockery in Chaucer's apparent tolerance here) it is not the opinion appropriate to one who has accepted the monkish discipline. The phrases from the racy peasant speech:

He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen . . .

But thilke text held he nat worth an oistre . . . .

identify him with the gusto and contemptuous horse-sense of the sensual man as opposed to the scholar and the saint with whom a

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monk ought rather to have taken his stand. Contempt for the incapacities of monks, their helplessness outside the cloister—

> Ne that a monk, whan he is cloisterlees,
> Is lykned til a fish that is waterlees,

understandable, perhaps, in the labouring and unlettered peasantry, is less so in the Monk because his very freedom from these monkish incapacities implies that he should not have been a monk at all. The argument which seems to sustain, but really undermines the 'And I seyde his opinioun was good', should render the irony difficult to ignore:

> What sholde he studie, and make himselven wood,
> Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure,
> Or swinken with his handes, and laboure,
> As Austin bit? How shal the world be served? . . .

'How shal the world be served'—the Monk's function was not, of course, to serve the world but to serve God. It should have become clear enough that the opposition here is not between the studious bookish man—'le clerc' (Chaucer himself)—and the manual labourer (the peasant) for 'Austin bit' the monk also 'swinken with his handes and laboure', and that is also dismissed by the quite bogus 'How shal the world be served'; but the opposition is between the studious disciplined man and the worldly man who wastes his energies in sensual pleasure and sport. That the passage should have been misread as expressing Chaucer's approval of the Monk is a sad commentary on the modern confusion of values or, at worst, on the wilful identification of the modern reader with the sensual man.

> Of priking and of hunting for the hare
> Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare . . .

There is an even grosser waste and misdirection of energy than in the case of the Prioresse's excess of tenderness for mice and pampering little dogs. Unlike the Prioresse's AMOR VINCIT OMNIA, the love-knot at the end of the gold pin that fastens his hood under his chin is not ambiguous. The again distinct visualization shows us a well cared for, over-indulged, pampered body.

> His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
> And eek his face, as he had been anoint.
> He was a lord ful fat and in good point;
> His eyen stepe, and rolling in his heed,
> That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
> His botes souple, his hors in greet estat . . .

'As he had been anoint', in addition to its descriptive function, introduces a contrast between the holy oil and his greasy fatness;

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'in good point', as might be said of a horse or dog, further emphasizes his animality.

> Now certeinly he was a fair prelat;
> He was nat pale as a for-pyned goost.
> A fat swan loved he best of any roost . . .

The irony is summed up in the ambiguity of 'a fair prelat'. This love of good eating and good hunting is 'fair' in the worldly, not spiritual sense.

In the 'character' of the Friar the irony, based on a rather broader version of the same fundamental contrast, could scarcely be mistaken. The traditional themes of abuse of confession and of covetousness, the more indecent in one vowed to celibacy and to poverty, form—as more elementarily in the *Romaunt of the Rose*—the moral pattern.

> Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
> With frankeleyns over-al in his contree,
> And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
> For he had power of confessioun,
> As seyde him-self, more than a curat,
> For of his ordre he was licentiat.
> Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
> And pleasaunt was his absolucioun;
> He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
> Ther as he wiste to han a good pitaunce;
> For unto a povre ordre for to yive
> Is signe that a man is wel y-shrive.
> For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
> He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
> For many a man so hard is of his herte,
> He may nat wepe al-thogh him sore smerte.
> Therfore, in stede of weping and preyeres,
> Men moot yeve silver to the povre freres.

The quietude of Chaucer's subtle and complete knowledge makes one doubt whether 'satire' is the right word even here.

> His tipet was ay farsed ful of knyves
> And pinnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
> His nekke whyt was as the flour-de-lys . . .

The simile of the 'flour-de-lys', besides introducing an unexpected burlesque effect sufficient to prevent the amorous scoundrel from too much oppressing the mind, perhaps hints an unhealthy fleshy whiteness. His personal connections are determined not by his religious duty, which would direct him to 'lazars' and 'beggesteres', but by his own need for fleshly satisfactions—including the one of putting on more flesh.

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He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And everich hostier and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
For un-to swich a worthy man as he
Accorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with seke lazars aqueyntaunce.
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
For to del!n with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille . . .

His distinction as a member of a holy order was that:

He was the beste beggere in his hous . . .
For thogh a widwe hadde noght a sho . . .
Yet wolde he have a ferthing, er he wente . . .

He preys on the charity of those who are themselves in most need of charity. Thus when at the end we are presented, in that excellent simile of the bell, with his round, prosperous, blown-up image, we are already aware of its immoral basis

For there he was nat lyk a cloisterer,
With a thredbar cope, as is a povre scoler,
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worsted was his semi-cope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse,
Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse . . .

With the Somnour and Pardoner we have departed a long way from the 'character' of the Prioresse in which the rarified delicacy of the irony has a close correspondence to her mannered refinement. Yet one dare not speak of caricature even in connection with these picaresque rogues and vagabonds. Excess inheres solely in the objects of contemplation and not in the contemplation, which is as steady, as unemphatic and undistorted, as ever. That serene scrutiny never rested on anything more repellent. Yet the pair are impudently on top of the world, arch-swindlers beneath the Church's capacious cloak, preying on human credulity and superstition.

That hadde a fyr-reed cherubinnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe;
With scalled browes blake, and piled berd;
Of his visage children were aferd . . .

In that initial image of a 'cherubinnes face'—a face in itself innocent, child-like—'fyr-reed' produces a grotesque, shocking effect converting the angelic image to that of some gargoylish carving or painted stage devil:

Of his visage children were aferd.

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The repulsive details of his visible bestiality culminate in the terrifyingness of his drunken madness.

> Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
> And for to drinken strong wyn, reed as blood,
> Than wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
> And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
> Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.

The Latin coming from his mouth, though the explanation of why it does so is simple, intensifies the unnatural gargoylish effect. The amazing blasphemous creature is totally disrespectful, aweless of ecclesiastical sanctions and divine justice:

> 'Purs is the erchedeknes helle', seyde he.

The final lines leave us with an image of a revelling wanton and fantastical buffoon.

> A gerland hadde he set up-on his heed,
> As greet as it were for an ale-stake;
> A bokeler hadde he maad him of a cake . . .

The pardoner, an individualisation of the stock satiric figure, is rather more of a depraved fantastic than his bestial companion. There is a suggestion of craziness ('discheveld' and 'glaringe eyen'), certainly of abnormality, in the creature.

> Ful loude he song, 'Com hider, love, to me'.
> This somnour bar to him a stif burdoun,
> Was never trompe of half so greet a soun.
> This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
> But smothe it heng, as dooth a strike of flex;
> By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
> And ther-with he his shuldres over-spradde;
> But thinne it lay, by colpons oon and oon;
> But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
> For it was trussed up in his walet.
> Him thoughte, he rood al of the newe jet;
> Discheveld, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
> Swiche glaringe eyen hadde he as an hare.
> A vernicle hadde he sowed on his cappe.
> His walet lay biforn him in his lappe,
> Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
> A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
> No berd hadde he, ne never sholde have . . .

Once again, if the similes were removed, the character would lose its distinctness.. The comparisons with the hare and the goat, besides defining eyes and voice, probably also connect him

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generally with these odd beasts. The specification of the junk which he carries about with him as baits to deceive ignorance and superstitious credulity leaves one fascinated by the impudence, and amazed by the success, of his rapacious charlatanism:

> For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
> Which that, he seyde, was our lady veyl.
> He seyde, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
> That sëynt Peter hadde, whan that he wente
> Up-on the see, til Jesu Crist him hente.
> He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
> And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
> But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
> A povre person dwelling up-on lond,
> Up-on a day he gat him more moneye
> Than that the person gat in monthes tweye.
> And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,
> He made the person and the peple his apes . . .

The passage lends its force to the final irony:

> But trewely to tellen, atte laste,
> He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste . . .

The implication is that only in church was he a 'noble ecclesiaste' and, further that he was unscrupulous and cunning enough to profit from posturing as a 'noble ecclesiaste'—as indeed becomes explicit; it is another of his profitable deceptions:

> He moste preche, and wel affyle his tonge,
> To winne silver . . .

The motive is the old one of cupidity.[1]

The Pardoner's Prologue to his Tale and the Tale itself are further extensions and illustrations of these themes. But the most remarkable of the 'confessions' (another is the Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale) is the Wyf of Bathes Prologue—another organic outgrowth from a 'character' in the great *Prologue*—and before considering the Pardoner's Tale in relation to the Pardoner I propose to consider the Wyf and her extensive overflow. Her Prologue overshadows her Tale as the Pardoner's Tale overshadows his Prologue. First, then, a 'character' in relation to its prologue; then a 'character' in relation to its tale.

Among the secular figures the Wyf depends partly on a similar

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[1]Avarice is not a sin special to the clergy. Compare also the Physician:

> For gold in phisik is a cordial,
> Therfore he lovede gold in special.

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ironical opposition between sacred formality and profane impulse as do the Prioresse, the Monk and others of the ecclesiastics. She is no more, and no less, a profane figure than they.

> In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
> That to th' offring bifore hir sholde goon;
> And if ther dide, certeyn, so wrooth was she,
> That she was out of alle charitee . . .

'Charitee' is almost as much a key-word of the irony (but in a slightly different way) as 'conscience' in the 'character' of the Prioresse. The sin she here typifies is that of pride—she must go before; her vanity flares out, is flaunted, in her flamboyant dress *especially* on a Sunday:

> Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
> That on a Sunday were up-on hir heed.
> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful moiste and newe . . .

At the same time ('shoos ful moiste and newe') she is a satire on a class—the newly opulent, vulgarly ostentatious cloth-making bourgeoisie. That is the moral groundwork of the character. But of course she is individualized, and in spite of everything, in spite of her loud dress and manner, she is a humanly attractive as well as dazzling figure, gay, talkative, a formidable, dominating person.

> Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
> She was a worthy womman al hir lyve,
> Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve,
> Withouten other companye in youthe . . .

(Here, contrasting with her amorous adventures, there follow some references to her many and far pilgrimages.

> She coude muche of wandring by the weye—

if, as is not impossible in Chaucer, it contains a reference to the errant soul, may again be subtly ironical).

> Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
> Up-on an amblere esily she sat,
> Y-wimpled wel, and on hir heed an hat
> As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
> A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
> And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
> In felawschip wel coude she laughe and carpe.
> Of remedyes of love she knew perchaunce,
> For she coude of that art the olde daunce.

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The references to 'bokeler', 'targe' and 'spores', in addition to their descriptive function, emphasize her masterfulness.

This massive scarlet figure is set talking in her prologue. Her tongue loosened, she moves without inhibitions through her conjugal past. She is freely self-revelatory and self-explanatory, as the Pardoner is in his prologue. It is the convention of the 'confession' in both cases. But in the Wyf's case it does not outrage modern notions of versimilitude—though it may outrage notions of decency—that she should talk about herself and her five husbands publicly thus; and therefore the convention presents the modern reader with almost no difficulty—in fact, we are scarcely aware of it as a convention.

The Wyf in her prologue typifies principally appetite and masterfulness, Venus and Mars. But the pattern of the comedy in this case is by no means simply a morally one-sided 'sacred-profane' opposition. The Wyf wins considerable rational sympathy to her side—much as the goliardic Pandarus does also in his way—for she is set in opposition to a meagre and barren, bookish and academic scholasticism that bolsters up age-long, religiously-sanctioned and authorised, male prejudice and tyranny. She has nature and sense a good deal if by no means entirely, on her side; so that her rebellious excesses, clearly marked by the two-edged satire as such, are yet excesses of a joyous spontaneity and fertility essential to the going-on and renewal of life.

She begins by usurping the air of scholastic authority. With a feint of demonstrating scholastic method she sophistically turns the method to the aggrandisement of her carnal instincts and creature purposes. In the manner of the clerks, but on the opposite side, she cites biblical and historical instances—Solomon's polygamy—as authoritatively licencing incontinence. She has in fact her own profane uses for the Bible:

> But wel I woot expres, with-oute lye,
> God bad us for to wexe and multiplye.
> That gentil text can I wel understonde.
> Eek wel I woot he seyde, myn housbonde
> Sholde lete fader and moder, and take me;
> But of no nombre mencioun made he . . .

She unscrupulously shifts the emphasis on to her own ego in her quotations and misquotations:

> Sholde lete fader and moder, and take me.

She enlists God himself on the side of incontinence—in defiance of the clerks who exalted virginity—by giving boundless general application to a phrase:

> God bad us for to wexe and multiplye—

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that in the Bible has particular and restricted reference. Again she coolly sets aside Christ's teaching—the ideal perfection of which she piously acknowledges—as being, however, in any case not applicable to herself:

> He spak to hem that wolde live parfitly;
> And lordinges, by your leve, that am nat I.

This humility is more apparent than real. To herself, it is clear, she is the great exception.

She proceeds publicly to review her five husbands in turn:

> . . . three of hem were gode and two were badde . . .

The three first were good because they were easily governed. She explains, and enacts, how she did so by means of that scolding tongue which the satires attribute to the wives. The good husbands were all rich and old; and, she demonstrates with a specimen of her aggressive complaints and abuse—revealing and playing on the motives of jealousy, envy and covetousness—how she obtained from them adequate licence for herself and satisfaction of her personal vanity.

> I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,
> That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe
> To bringe me gaye thinges fro the fayre.
> They were ful glad whan I spak to hem fayre . . .
> 'Sir olde kaynard, is this thyn array?
> Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?
> She is honoured over-al ther she goth;
> I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty cloth.
> What dostow at my neighebores hous?
> Is she so fair? artow so amorous?
> What rowne ye with our mayde? ben'-cite!
> Sir olde lechour, lat thy japes be!
> And if I have a gossib or a freend,
> With-outen gilt, thou chydest as a feend,
> If that I walke or pleye un-to his hous?
> Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,
> And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!

The husband's rejoinder (which she next reproduces) advances the mediaeval notion of all desirable women, and all who desire them, going to the Devil.

> Thou seyst, som folk desyre us for richesse,
> Som for our shap, and som for our fairnesse;
> And som, for she can outher singe or daunce,
> And som, for gentillesse and daliaunce;

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Som, for hir handes and hir armes smale;
Thus goth al to the devel by thy tale.

The Wyf herself is sceptical—'by thy tale'—. The husband's abuse is proverbial in the manner of the rhetoricians and gathers to a fantastic climax.

Thow seyst that dropping houses, and eek smoke,
And chyding wyves, maken men to flee
Out of hir owene hous; a! ben'cite!
What eyleth swich an old man for to chyde?

But the force of his abusive rhetoric is (for her) blunted abruptly as coming from an old man—Elde—with whom the young apprentice, the gay bachelor—Youthe and Mirthe—contrasts.

Thus seistow, olde barel ful of lyes!
And yet of our apprentice Janekyn,
For his crisp heer, shyninge as gold so fyn,
And for he squiereth me bothe up and doun,
Yet hastow caught a fals suspecioun.

The 'crisp heer, shyninge as gold so fyn' connects him with the allegories.

The bad husbands (the fourth and fifth) were bad because she failed to govern them; with them she was about evenly matched. The fourth was a version of the 'revelour', and in deadly combat with him she confesses she scarcely held her own as his female counterpart.

My fourthe housbonde was a revelour,
This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour;
And I was yong and ful of ragerye,
Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.
Wel coude I daunce to an harpe smale,
And singe, y-wis, as any nightingale,
Whan I had dronke a draughte of swete wyn.
Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,
That with a staf birafte his wyf hir lyf,
For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,
He sholde nat han daunted me fro drinke;
And, after wyn, on Venus moste I thinke . . .

But, lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
Up-on my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
It tikleth me aboute myn herte rote.
Unto this day it dooth myn herte bote
That I have had my world as in my tyme.

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But age, allas! that al wol envenyme,
Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith;
Lat go, fare-wel, the devel go therwith!

She has the vigour of the fabliau women (*cf.* Alisoun of the Miller's Tale)—'full of ragerye, stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye'—combined with a hint—the small harp, the nightingale voice—of the siren accomplishments of the courtly ladies, when she was inspired by Bacchus. In terms of the Sins, she typifies 'glotonye' ('dronkennesse') and 'lecherye'; translated to the plane of the courtly allegory of love, she would walk in the company of Bacchus and Venus as 'Youthe, Beautee, Jolitee'. She passes, of necessity, therefore, at last to the theme of Age.

But age, allas! that al wol envenyme.

Her explosive invocations of Christ and the Devil are violently blasphemous in their unconscious effect. Her consolation is the profane one that she has had *her* world—the sensual world—the fruit of fierce and bitter conflict (she would have got the better even of Metellius the wife-murderer) with her male counterpart, the 'revelour', for whom she has consequently a generous regard.

By god, in erthe I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie.

The religious imagery (she has been in many pilgrimages) again renders conspicuous by its incongruity her deep profanity.

The Wyf, throughout, reproduces enthusiastically the abuse of her sex that was the stock-in-trade of the traditional satire, glorying quite unashamedly in its testimony to 'we wemen's' unruliness. The licentious gossip of the wives—again one of the prolific sources of satire—is an enlivening element in the Wyf's Prologue. (Talk was, of course, one of the primary mediaeval entertainments—largely centering in its subject matter round 'the woman and the priest'—and verse recitation might itself be regarded as a stylised branch of it).

With my gossib, dwellinge in oure toun,
God have hir soule! hir name was Alisoun.
She knew myn herte and eek my privetee
Bet than our parisshe-preest, so moot I thee!
To hir biwreyed I my conseil al.
For had myn housbonde pissed on a wal,
Or doon a thing that sholde han cost his lyf,
To hir, and to another worthy wyf,
And to my nece, which that I loved weel,
I wolde han told his conseil every-deel.
And so I dide ful often, god it wot,
That made his face ful often reed and hoot.

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This merges into a gossiping account—the Wyf's whole prologue is itself a kind of monologue of gossip—of how in the season of fasting and repentance she took the opportunity of her husband's absence to 'pleye'.

> And so bifel that ones, in a Lente,
> (So often tymes I to my gossib wente,
> For ever yet I lovede to be gay,
> And for to walke, in Marche, Averille, and May,
> Fro hous to hous, to here sondry talis),
> That Jankin clerk, and my gossib dame, Alis,
> And I my-self, in-to the feldes wente.
> Myn housbond was at London al that Lente;
> I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,
> And for to see, and eek for to be seye
> Of lusty folk; what wiste I wher my grace
> Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
> Therefore I made my visitaciouns,
> To vigilies and to processiouns,
> To preching eek and to thise pilgrimages,
> To pleyes of miracles and mariages,
> And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.
> Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mytes,
> Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;
> And wostow why? for they were used weel.

Public religious occasions are for her (as perhaps for Criseyde in the temple) opportunities for the profanity of seeing and being seen. Her gay scarlet clothing that keeps fresh because used well challenges the scriptural admonition that on earth moth and rust corrupt.

The Wyf as the widow at the funeral of her husband (the fourth) is even more clearly from the same *root* as Criseyde in the temple—the profane figure piously concealed. The neighbours suppose she is absorbed in weeping, as would be proper; but behind her 'coverchief' she 'weeps but smal' for she is already provided for, and her appetite is aroused by Jankin's pair of legs walking behind her late husband's bier.

> Whan that my fourthe housbond was on bere,
> I weep algate, and made sory chere,
> As wyves moten, for it is usage,
> And with my coverchief covered my visage;
> But for that I was purveyed of a make,
> I weep but smal, and that I undertake.
> To chirche was myn housbond born a-morwe
> With neighebores, that for him maden sorwe;
> And Jankin oure clerk was oon of tho.
> As help me god, whan that I saugh him go
> After the bere, me thoughte he hadde a paire

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Of legges and of feet so clene and faire,
That al myn herte I yaf un-to his hold.
He was, I trowe, a twenty winter old,
And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth;
But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.
Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel;
I hadde the prente of sëynt Venus seel.
As help me god, I was a lusty oon.

She provides, as part of the 'confession', her own explanation:

For certes, I am al Venerian
In felinge, and myn herte is Marcien.
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardinesse.
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne.
Allas! allas! that ever love was sinne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun
By vertu of my constellacioun;
That made me I coude noght withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes mark up-on my face,
And also in another privee place.
For, god so wis be my savacioun,
I ne loved never by no discrecioun,
But ever flowede myn appetyt,
Al were he short or long, or blak or whyt;
I took no kepe, so that he lyked me . . .

The Wyf's rejection of 'discrecioun' and her pursuit of 'inclinacioun' or 'appetyt' (even though 'by vertu of my constellacioun') acts against the religious terminology ('god so wis be my savacioun'); her very existence in the mediaeval religious context is an unconscious blasphemy. She is here associated with Mars and Venus (as elsewhere with Bacchus and Venus) in preparation for the sanguinary climax:

By god, he smoot me ones on the list,
For that I rente out of his book a leef,
That of the strook myn ere wex al deef

—the tearing of the leaf out of the book by the enraged wife symbolical of the conflict between the wives and the clerks.

For, her fifth and latest husband, Jankin, is a clerk and the most formidable of the five. He brings to bear against her typification of nature and instinct the weight and authority of accumulated European erudition. The reservation has to be made that, just as the wife herself is adept at the misuse of books, at corrupting

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authority and quoting Scripture on the Devil's behalf, the clerk is also not a disinterested investigator of the truth. If he were, the authority of books might be revealed as not exclusively counter to nature and instinct. But with his books the clerk is conducting not a disinterested investigation but a war.

> For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
> That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,
> But—if it be of holy seintes lyves . . .
>
> By god, if wommen hadde writen stories,
> As clerkes han with-inne hir oratories,
> They wolde han writen of men more wikkednesse.

The clerk's mediaeval massing of Biblical and classical instances and authorities towards what turns out to be a melodramatic climax is rich Chaucerian comedy. The book the clerk was reading aloud to the Wyf on the fatal evening was a compendium of such instances:

> . . . a book of wikked wyves.
> He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves
> Than been of gode wyves in the Bible.

The meaning of the battle of the Wyf and the clerk is multiplied by the reminder that it is but an episode in the long war mythologised as that between Mercury and Venus.

> Mercurie loveth wisdom and science,
> And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.

The Wyf on her side is armed with shrewd knowledge—Chaucer's knowledge—of human nature.

> Therfore no womman of no clerk is preysed.
> The clerk, whan he is old , and may noght do
> Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,
> Than sit he doun, and writ in his dotage
> That wommen can nat kepe hir mariage!

The clerk's accumulation of *exempla* of the wicked wives of the Bible and of Greek and Roman legend who brought misfortune and death to their husbands culminates in grand buffoonery of imagined melodrama.

> That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,
> And lete hir lechour dighte hir al the night
> Whyl that the corps lay in the floor up-right.

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And somme han drive nayles in hir brayn
Whyl that they slepte, and thus they han hem slayn.
Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hir drinke.

If we compare this with a passage of youthful Shakespeare in *Richard II* on the misfortune of kings :

How some have been deposed; some slain in war;
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
Some poisoned by their wives; some sleeping killed;
All murdered . . .

we see, besides the distinctness of its images, that the Chaucer—though it has not the sweep of the Shakespeare—is contained within a steadying criticism, a consciousness of its own ultimate lack of seriousness. Though the Shakespeare passage is from a play and the Chaucer not, Chaucer's clerk is the more nearly a complete dramatisation.[2] In deliberately employing this rhetoric to madden his wife the clerk overreaches himself and becomes himself a fantastic figure. The only possible climax—and yet anti-climax—is a sanguinary release; anti-climax, for the mutilation of the book and the exchange of blows are a sudden break in the accumulated inner tension, a release of melodramatic external clowning as if in front of an audience in a theatre. The clerk's immediate remorse at having almost murdered his wife precipitates the additional dramatic surprise of his sudden surrender. For the clerk is after all governed like anyone else by his instinctive responses.

'O! hastow slayn me, false theef?' I seyde,
'And for my land thus hastow mordred me?
Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee'.
And neer he cam, and kneled faire adoun,
And seyde, 'dere suster Alisoun,
As help me god, I shal thee never smyte . . .'

JOHN SPEIRS.

(*To be concluded*)

---

[2]The Donne rhetoric on Death (to take another Elizabethan-Jacobean instance)—

Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings and desperate men
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell—

is, on the other hand, steadied by its own internal weight thought—the conceit of Death as itself a slave.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

MORE APOLOGIES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Once again we have to apologize for a late appearance. There have been difficulties at the printing-house and difficulties on the editorial side—all occasioned by the war, and so of a kind that it might seem rash to count on dealing with more successfully as the war lengthens out. All the same, we have every intention of carrying on, and no reason to despair of making head against the difficulties. Perhaps these assurances will be found more convincing if, on second thoughts, we qualify 'all occasioned by the war' with a little explanation. Since the editorial office has never been a well-found institution, duly provided for in the matter of time and labour, the running of *Scrutiny* has always been dependent on luck. Looking back, we see almost every issue as a painfully exciting last-minute achievement. Even in peace-time we should have said that there was no margin for meeting a run of bad luck. Under war-conditions . . . Last summer's bomb, from which our periodicity has never recovered, was of course a direct intervention of the war. But, under war-conditions, even a comparatively minor domestic misfortune—say, chickenpox—may hold up *Scrutiny* as effectively. There are times when such misfortunes hinder disastrously, and times that are relatively free from them. As for the difficulties caused directly by the war, there is a prospect that some may be mitigated by good luck.

Our readers, therefore, are asked to count on the continuance of *Scrutiny*, and to be forbearing about irregularities.

THE LIBERATION OF POETRY.

This, with the addition of the dates, '1930-1941', is the sub-title of a book that has not been reviewed in *Scrutiny*. The main title is *Auden and After*, and the book, a Book Society recommendation, has sold very well.[1] The representative quality for which it deserves some attention will perhaps come out sufficiently in quoted passages.

[1] *Auden and After*, by Francis Scarfe (Routledge, 8/6).

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'But Mr. Swingler goes farther, writing: "When they became 'revolutionary' it was in order to revolutionize literature, not society". Are we to believe, then, that Auden and his friends deliberately isolated themselves from their own class for the fun of the thing, and for ten years packed their voluminous work with revolutionary ideas in which they did not believe?'

'W. H. Auden will also be an important poet. He is a poet who is destined to miss greatness but who might achieve importance by his synthesis of the typical thought and practice of poetry of his own time. But Spender might yet prove a greater poet: while the place of "important" poet might well be wrested from him by T. S. Eliot'.

The critic's concession that 'Eliot is unquestionably a finer poet and a better craftsman, with better taste, a more sure sense of proportion and a firmer control of language' doesn't make the critical habit of all this the less striking. It is a representative kind of habit that has been commented on here from time to time in the past. The writer of the book in question does indeed intimate that he sees faults and limitations in the poets of the 'Poetic Renaissance'—the Group. But in discussing the Group he takes over essentially the valuations that they themselves, in the past decade, put into currency; he shares their assumptions regarding their relative distinction and significance, and he clearly has no suspicion of the differences that separate great genius, manifested in decisive achievement, from intellectual and spiritual hobble-de-hoydom—which is at any rate a fair description of the corporate ethos that could arrest even a real talent at an embarrassing stage of immaturity.

The consequences of that abeyance of the critical function which was entailed in the triumph of the Group are what we see in this book. The 'Liberation of Poetry' celebrated is, for critic and poet, a liberation from all critical inhibition: standards are out of sight and out of surmise:

'And he can combine humour with tenderness in a way which is characteristic of the best English folk-songs:

> The wind is a girl's heart,
> The wind is an apple in the spring,
> The wind is a horse-shoe swinging on a gate.
>
> I offered her an orchard of trees hung with nails,
> I offered her a basket of deer,
> She only took the eye from my lap.
>
> But there's deer in the orchard,
> My apples are yours for the picking,
> Dear, I only want the horseshoe and the honest truth.

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Moore is writing spontaneously, constantly running the risk of looking foolish—and occasionally being so—and writing perhaps a little too much . . . I do not suggest that Moore is at any time mediocre, for his delicacy and sense of humour preserve him from that, but it is certain that he is rich enough to prune his work a little and keep it to the level of his best achievements. And the same can be said of the Apocalyptic poets as a whole: having explored their capacities, it is now their task to achieve a synthesis'.

It isn't easy to make the point without appearing to indulge in guying—an indulgence that one would certainly not wish to be suspected of. But here are some further typical passages:

'Philip O'Connor is an ingenious Left humourist, whose poems are always attractive but never very profound. One does not need to belong to such a movement to write:

> The baby should have oranges, which run through him nourishingly
> He would then make more noise.
> We would wash him, he would shine like silver spoons.

No, the only poets of importance in the movement are Dylan Thomas, Henry Treece and Nicholas Moore (in that order), followed by Fraser, Hendry and Tom Scott. Hendry's ability is rather limited to giving a generalized expression of an emotion . .'

'We are moving towards a new Romantic movement, less irresponsible than Surrealism and Dadaism, less frantic than that represented by Lawrence, less "literary" than that of Laura Riding. . . So many seeds of Romanticism, planted in the past by Blake, by Byron, by Shelley, Wilde, Lawrence, Dylan Thomas, are in process of bearing fruit'.

'The Romantic movement is not yet over, and in spite of ourselves we are part of it. Graves with his dragons, Riding with her introspection, Eliot with his picture of social disintegration and isolation of the individual, Auden with his myths and slang, his revolt in both language and politics, the Sitwells with their making of music and fantasy; we are all in it up to the neck'.

'The poet at the present time is therefore in a difficult position. In literature alone, never mind society, he is faced by impossible alternatives: on the one side the reporting and materialist conception of Grigson and his group; on any other, the cultural synthesis recommended by Eliot and Pound; . .' . . .

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Among the many young writers respectfully mentioned in *Auden and After* there may be one or two real talents, potential poets, but the environment represented by these extracts is an environment in which the potential poet will be robust indeed if he develops. And there is good reason for saying that it is the environment in which the potential poet, in the Sixth Form and at the university, is likely to find himself. By way of the sophisticated naïveties and arrested developments of the 'thirties we seem to have got back to something very like the Georgian days. Poetry is easy, the more so since readers nowadays will not complain about unintelligibility: you sit down and write, and, in a world in which there are so many important poets, all more or less as important as one another, the operative current notions of art, technique and discipline, and what there is for a young poet to learn, are not in the least inhibiting. It is easy, at any rate for a great many, to get printed, and once you are in print you have a very good chance of an encouraging mention. With luck (and about the conditions of such luck anyone who has watched literary society a little could say something), the mention becomes a habit and a reputation. It was the spectacle of some of Mr. Scarfe's younger reputations becoming currency in highbrow American journals that prompted this note.

But the doubt recurs: was there, after all, any point in writing it? The reader in view learns from it nothing he didn't know. Yet a reminder now and then of a state of affairs that we tend to dismiss from our minds because there could be no profit in direct attacks upon it is perhaps desirable. And the reader who looks through the book in question, reminding himself that it is a representative document, will be in a better position to realize certain editorial difficulties. 'Shall we review it? We ought—but can we?' In the 'thirties the trouble was that you couldn't, however tactfully, suggest the necessary criticisms without getting the gang-war response. That was depressing, but you were at any rate assured of having made some impact. To-day you know that the only reader who is likely to pay any attention at all won't see much point in your saying again what is in any case obvious. Yet so much that demands to be reviewed as representative cannot be dealt with without that effect of nagging reiteration from which you shy.

F.R.L.

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'WE HAVE NOT REACHED CONCLUSION'

LITTLE GIDDING, by T. S. Eliot (*Faber and Faber,* 1942, 1/- net).

The opening of the poem speaks of renewed life of unimaginable splendour, seen in promise amidst the cold decline of age. It offers no revival of life-processes; it is a spring time, 'But not in time's covenant'. If this 'midwinter spring' has such blooms as the snow on hedges,

> Where is the summer, the unimaginable
> Zero summer?

With the sun blazing on the ice, the idea of pentecostal fire, of central importance in the poem, comes in for the first time, an intense, blinding promise of life and (as later passages show) almost unbearable.

The church of Little Gidding introduces another theme of the poem. Anchored in time and space, but for some people serving as the world's end where they can fulfil a purpose outside time and space, it gives contact with spiritual concerns through earthly and human things.

A third theme, important for the whole poem, is also stated in the first section: that the present is able to take up, and even give added meaning to, the values of the past. Here too the pentecostal idea comes in:

> And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
> They can tell you, being dead: the communication
> Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

Section II can be regarded as the *logical* starting point of the whole poem. It deals with the desolation of death and the futility of life for those who have had no conviction of spiritual values in their life's work. First come three sharply organized riming stanzas to evoke, by image and idea but without literal statement, our sense of the hopeless death of air, earth, fire and water, seen not only as the elements of man's existence but as the means of his destruction and dismissal. The tone having been set by these stanzas, there opens a narrative passage describing the dreary bitterness in which a life of literary culture can end if it has brought no sense of spiritual values. The life presented is one, such as Mr. Eliot's own, of effort after clear speech and exact thought, and the passage amounts to a shuddering 'There but for the grace of God go I'. It reveals more clearly than ever the articles in *The Criterion* did, years ago, what it was in 'humanism' that Mr. Eliot recoiled from so violently. What

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the humanist's ghost sees in his life are futility, isolation, and guilt on account of his self-assertive prowess—'Which once you took for exercise of virtue'—and the measure of aggression against others which that must bring.

The verse in this narrative passage, with its regular measure and insistent alliteration, so effective for combining the macabre with the urbane and dreary, is a way to indicate and a way to control the pressure of urgent misery and self-disgust. The motive power of this passage, as of so much of Mr. Eliot's earlier poetry, is repulsion. But in the poem as a whole the other motive force is dominant: there is a movement of feeling and conviction outwards, reaching towards what attracts. The other parts of the poem can be viewed as working out an alternative to the prospect of life presented in this narrative.

Section III sees the foundation for such an alternative in the contact with spiritual values, especially as they appear in the tradition of the past. Detachment (distinguished from indifference) allows us to use both our own past and the historical past in such a way as to draw on their present spiritual significance for us without entangling us in regressive yearning for a pattern which no longer is:

> History may be servitude,
> History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
> The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
> To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Once we accept the significance of the spiritual motives and intentions of the past, even the factions connected with the church and community of Little Gidding leave us an inheritance; we can be at one with the whole past, including the sinning and defeated past, for its people were spiritually alive,

> All touched by a common genius,
> United in the strife which divided them.

But the humanist's fate cannot be escaped in so gentle and placid a way; a more formidable ordeal is waiting. In contrast to the leisurely meditation of section III, the fourth section is a forceful passage, close-knit with rime, and incisive. Its theme is the terrifying fierceness of the pentecostal experience, the dove bringing fire. This is not the fire of expiation, such as the humanist had to suffer. It is the consuming experience of love, the surrender to a spiritual principle beyond us, and the only alternative to consuming ourselves with the miserable fires of sin and error. This pentecostal ordeal must be met before the blinding promise seen in 'midwinter spring' can be accepted.

The final section develops the idea that every experience is

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integrated with all the others, so that the fulness of exploration means a return, with better understanding, to the point where you started. The theme has already been foreshadowed in section III where detachment is seen to give liberation from the future as well as the past, so that neither past nor future has any fascination of a kind that could breed in us a reluctance to accept the present fully.

The tyranny of sequence and duration in life is thus reduced. Time-processes are viewed as aspects of a pattern which can be grasped in its entirety at any one of its moments:

> The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree
> Are of equal duration.

One effect of this view of time and experience is to rob the moment of death of any over-significance we may have given it. For the humanist of section II life trails off just because it can't manage to endure. For the man convinced of spiritual values life is a coherent pattern in which the ending has its due place and, because it is part of a pattern, itself leads into the beginning. An over-strong terror of death is often one expression of the fear of living, for death is one of the life-processes that seem too terrifying to be borne. In examining one means of becoming reconciled to death, Mr. Eliot can show us life too made bearable, unfrightening, positively inviting:

> With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
>
> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.

Here is the clearest expression of a motive force other than repulsion. Its dominance makes this poem—to put it very simply—far happier than most of Mr. Eliot's.

Being reconciled to death and the conditions of life restores the golden age of unfearful natural living and lets you safely, without regression, recapture the wonder and easy rightness of certain moments, especially in early childhood:

> At the source of the longest river
> The voice of the hidden waterfall
> And the children in the apple-tree
> Not known, because not looked for
> But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
> Between two waves of the sea.
> Quick now, here, now, always—
> A condition of complete simplicity
> (Costing not less than everything)

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The whole of this last section suggests a serene and revitalized return from meditation to one's part in active living. It includes a re-affirmation of that concern with speech which has made up so much of Mr. Eliot's work and which could have been the bitter futility that it is for the ghostly humanist. The re-affirming passage (introduced as a simile to suggest the integrated patterning of all living experience) is an example of amazing condensation, of most comprehensive thinking given the air of leisured speech—not conversation but the considered speech of a man talking to a small group who are going to listen for a time without replying. It is one example of the intellectual quality of this poem. In most of Mr. Eliot's poems the intellectual materials which abound are used emotionally. In much of this poem they are used intellectually, in literal statement which is to be understood literally (for instance, the opening of section III). How such statements become poetry is a question outside the range of this review. To my mind they do, triumphantly, and for me it ranks among the major good fortunes of our time that so superb a poet is writing.

D. W. HARDING.

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HOPKINS AND YEATS

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, PRIEST AND POET, by John Pick (*O.U.P.*, 8/6).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, by V. K. Narayana Menon (*Oliver and Boyd*, 8/6).

It is now fifty or sixty years since Hopkins and Yeats started, in their different ways, to feel and react against the spiritual consumption which took the 19th century in middle life and wasted its art and letters with an extraordinary rapidity and thoroughness, and still we find the same disease approaching not convalescence but crisis. Our diagnosis, perhaps, becomes more accurate, but we fail to prescribe correctly. It will be time to attempt a definite assessment of the work of these two poets when the problems of collapsing standards which they had to face have been adequately solved; at present, any critical remarks upon them must be counted as suggestions and pointers, final judgment being left to a generation more comfortably detached from them.

The development, in Hopkins, of his distinctive genius, was both early and rapid, and seems to start with his reception into the Roman Church. Those of the early poems which have been preserved show an exquisitely developed capacity for sensuous experience, but lack the firm intellectual control of his later work. That control, which gives his poems a hardness of outline as his particularly finely developed sensitivity to details of sensuous experience give them a local accuracy and immediacy, came with his acceptance of Catholic doctrine. In his early and complete acceptance of the Church of Rome, Hopkins provided himself with a coherent and comprehensive view of the natural and supernatural order, and one with the support of a great European tradition behind it. The limits of speculation were fixed early for the Jesuit; and Hopkins, instead of wavering as he might have done, between many possible philosophical positions, took up one and remained confirmed in that for the whole of his life. This accounts at once for Hopkins's extremely early maturity and for the sustained success of almost everything he wrote. It was a source of strength to Hopkins that he was able to identify himself with an organized body and a traditional teaching at a time of moral chaos and disruption when every fundamental belief seemed questionable—

> And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss.

Nietzsche says in *The Use and Abuse of History:*

> 'A living thing can only be healthy, strong, and productive within a certain horizon; if it be incapable of drawing one round itself, or too selfish to lose its own view in another's, it will come to an untimely end'.

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The horizon which Hopkins drew round himself was far more comprehensive than that which other poets of his time drew round themselves—more comprehensive, for example, than Pater's aestheticism, or Tennyson's vague Arthurian idealism—and his work consequently surpasses theirs in firmness and depth. His suffering, as well as his ecstasy, took place within a framework which gave it a definite room and purpose. The ultimate questions were answered in a way which satisfied him, and his conviction gives his poetry the light single-mindedness which makes for vigour and concentration. One has only to contrast Hopkins with Auden to see how a really distinguished talent can become flabby and flaccid, or cheap and flashy, where this fundamental self-assurance is lacking. Hopkins never erred on the side of cheapness; his successors, influenced by him technically, in the mechanical sense, but constantly uncertain of the premises on which they write, often do. There is no period of flatness or sensationalism in Hopkins's 'poetic' career. Being outside the world of literary fashions, concentrating on an end in which poetry had its place and only its place, Hopkins avoided awkward immaturity and self-consciousness. He was beyond the risk of meretriciousness and cheap facility, not necessarily because his beliefs took the particular form which they did take, but because, such as he had were, at least, such as might recommend themselves to a mature and balanced intelligence. The religious impetus behind Hopkins is analogous to the social impetus behind the Caroline poets. It gives him a powerful backing and direction, enables him to concentrate his energy and, at a particularly uncertain and disintegrating period of English history, saves him the unnerving task which others have had to face of constructing, from fragments of belief and experience, something upon which to stand firmly in the middle of rubbish and ruins.

Yeats's position is very different from that of Hopkins. Hopkins might well have addressed to the young Yeats his remark

> 'You do not mean by mystery what a Catholic does; you mean an interesting uncertainty; but a Catholic by mystery means an incomprehensible certainty'.

Yeats moved from interesting uncertainty to interesting uncertainty with extraordinary appetite during most of his life. In *A Vision*, he says

> 'I wished for a system of thought that would leave my imagination free to create as it chose, and yet make all that it created or could create part of one history, and that, the soul's'.

His exploration in search of this system, with its essentially mutually exclusive demands, met with only temporary successes, which Yeats's intelligence admitted to be only partially satisfactory, and it finally left him with one force integrating his life and his work, enabling him to write firmly, coherently and organically. Hopkins identified himself with an external discipline and organisation. Yeats fell back,

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for his best work, upon his own powerful imagination. What he imagined, he had the power to realize concretely. His dreams, as it were, became as hard, clear and accurate as the simplest of waking experiences. His prose is filled with references to the extraordinary revelations and visions which he has, and, in prose, they have a most unsatisfactory vagueness and personal whimsiness about them, but nothing could be further removed from the listless, sleepy and dreamy than his great body of poetry. Compare his work with the more slender and really dreamlike verse of Walter de la Mare, and the amazing robustness and intensity of Yeats's imaginative life is at once underlined. The immediacy and urgency of his response to symbols and ideas, in themselves, perhaps, dubious and incoherent, strengthens his verse where a more humdrum talent and personality would have collapsed into vagueness and messy imprecision of feeling. The wild speculations in which he indulged, the numerous positions which he adopted and creeds which he nibbled so eagerly, the 'primum mobile' of his poetry, may seem artificial, incoherent, likely to lead to self-deception in carrying a man away from sober and serious considerations. There is all the difference between the stimulus behind Hopkins and the stimulus behind Yeats, but Yeats's response to that stimulus in his poetry is a serious powerful and genuine response. His deliberate other-worldliness, as a man, is translated in his best verse into the three dimensions of this world. The 'daemonic images' of his imagination become substantial and massive, because he gives them the conviction of his own belief in them. Without that, *Sailing to Byzantium* or *The Second Coming* would have been no more than vivid little excursions into fantasy and exoticism.

Yeats accepted no external discipline for his imagination. It is, perhaps, a symptom of the disintegrating standards of the period in which he was writing, the loss of general moral direction and stability, that Yeats the authoritarian and anti-individualist, should have been almost arrogantly self-assertive and confident of his own inner light. What he believed, or said he believed, his own philosophy, will not, perhaps, satisfy any mind but his own. He completely lacked the cautious academic virtues. Reasonable argument and carefully balanced judgment were foreign to him. The self-confident manner in which he would formulate a system which pretended to explain the Universe, or created his own individual synthesis of philosophical systems which he could scarcely claim to understand fully, seems to me to be a form of that 19th century Whiggery which he so much detested. But the absence of an acceptable cohesive philosophy in Yeats is amply compensated for by the convincing accuracy with which he realizes, in his verse, those experiences which, at the more steady emotional level of prose, might seem unsatisfactory, indefinite and personal in a very limiting way.

Yeats's ability as a poet developed over a very long period. The Pre-Raphaelite influence was in the first place, much stronger on Yeats than on Hopkins. As a professional poet, Yeats was naturally

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more involved in literary discussion, much more open to influence by other literary men, than was Hopkins, and he was definitely and strongly influenced by many ideas which Hopkins would probably have dismissed at once, had he even come in contact with them. Where a poet is in this way more open to outside influences, there will naturally be a longer period of development, while he assimilates completely what is permanent and central in his experience, and discards what is purely temporary and fashionable. The early Yeats could write:

> 'We would cast out of serious poetry those energetic rhythms, as of a man running . . . and we would seek out those wavering, meditative, organic rhythms . . .'

'Wavering' is the last word one would apply to the rhythms of *The Tower*. It is a long way from the Yeats of

> 'I believe that all men will more and more reject the opinion that Poetry is a criticism of life, and be more and more convinced that it is a revelation of an inner life'

to the Yeats of

> 'There are moments when I cannot believe in the reality of imaginations that are not familiar with long familiar things and symbols and places',

and, finally, to the greatest Yeats of:

> 'We should ascend out of common interests, the thoughts of the newspapers, of the market place, of men of science, but only in so far as one can carry the normal passionate reasoning self, the personality as a whole'.

It is, it seems to me, upon this last stand that the greatest of Yeats's poetry is founded.

What had happened to Yeats, then, by the time of the last poems? For not everyone will accept coolly Dr. Menon's opening sentence that 'his later work represents the consummation of a long and fruitful poetic career, and is a reminder of how a poet can and should develop'. The *Last Poems* seems to me to show a definite falling off. They have a thinness, hardness and dryness in direct contrast with the local vitality of the work of his middle period. There seems to be a peculiar meanness of conception which is limiting and almost offensive. The impetus of 'lust and rage' is not enough to carry him through successfully. Of the Yeats of the last poems one might almost say, what he said of George Eliot—that 'she seemed to have a dislike of all in life that gives one a springing foot'. Yeats saw the world moving, in his lifetime, appreciably further from his own ideals. It seems to me that, at the end of his life, his faith in the imaginative systems within which he had written his poetry began to be shaken and weakened. He had no organized

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body upon which to fall back, and had nothing to give him direction, no personal discipline, to steady him when his fertility and vitality began to decrease. His attitude became more and more negative. Life became stale; he mocked without being able to replace what he mocked with something more satisfactory. His old connections were held with less certainty; and he lacked the energy, the serious inclination, and, mostly, the humility, to accept or construct new ones. His position is admirably summed up in the verses which appeared in the *London Mercury* simultaneously with his death:

MAN

. . . All that I have said and done,
Now that I am old and ill,
Turns into a question till
I lie awake night after night
And never get the answer right.
And all seems evil, until I
Sleepless would lie down and die.

Dr. Pick and Dr. Menon have both assembled together in a small space interesting and suggestive ideas upon their subjects. Dr. Menon, with one or two lapses, is the more serious critic; Dr. Pick the more careful scholar. Dr. Pick's is not really a critical work at all—he tends to by-pass the main critical issues, but includes much raw material that will be useful to the critics. One cannot overlook his remark that Hopkins's poetry has some resemblance to Walt Whitman's—a very cautious statement as he makes it, but a very revealing one. He seems to me to prove his central thesis—that Hopkins's poetry and his religion are inseparable, and that the one springs from the other—quite convincingly, but after a while one begins to wonder how relevant to elucidation of the quality of Hopkins's poetry all the detailed cross-references to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius actually is. Read together, these two books suggest very forcibly those general aspects of the differences between Yeats and Hopkins which I have attempted to define. I have had to use Dr. Pick's and Dr. Menon's books alone, since no others, and not even complete works of the poets themselves, are at the moment accessible to me.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

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'EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY'

A NEW ORDER IN ENGLISH EDUCATION, by H. C. Dent (*University of London Press, Ltd.*, 3/6).

THE UNIVERSITIES IN TRANSFORMATION, by Adolf Löwe (*The Christian News-Letter Books, No.* 8. *The Sheldon Press,* 1/6).

As representative of a good deal of contemporary thinking about educational reform Mr. H. C. Dent's little book, *A New Order in English Education,* is worth some attention. Mr. Dent summarizes clearly and vigorously the main defects of the existing order—the almost complete lack of nursery schools; 'the criminal dilapidation of the nation's most valuable asset' that results from ending the education of the majority at fourteen and turning young boys and girls onto the labour market; the wretched buildings and excessively large classes of so many elementary schools; the atomistic teaching of subjects—'a meaningless and congested conglomeration'—in secondary schools dominated by the requirements of the School Certificate examination; the accentuation of social differences that results from the existence of schools with special privileges open only to the children of the well-to-do; and so on. In place of the present jumble of different systems Mr. Dent would have a unified structure of national education, informed with a genuine social purpose, and designed to meet the developing needs of children and young people up to the age of twenty-one, differentiation within the system to be detemined solely by aptitude. He pleads convincingly for the postponement of vocational training until a comparatively late stage of the educational process, and shows very clearly the inadequacy of merely raising the school age without a radical change in the status of the young person in the community as a whole; and he makes some excellent suggestions concerning adult education.

All this will, no doubt, receive the attention it deserves, for it is in line with a current of reforming opinion now very noticeable in all discussions of the post-war world. What is less likely to be remarked is a certain lack of concern where concern is essential if good intentions are to be matched by performance. And this, too, is symptomatic of very much that one hears about 'education for democracy'.

> 'The ideal democratic society (says Mr. Dent) may be briefly described as a self-orientated, self-governed, and self-disciplined community, which accords to every one of its members the utmost personal freedom compatible with the general interest, and is, indeed, dependent for its health, vigour, and dynamic upon their full exercise of this ordered freedom. The community as a whole, and the members as individuals, find their happiness in living

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together in a willed, and willing, state of harmony on the basis of each for the good of all and all for the good of each; and their purpose in a gladly co-operative endeavour to bring about a continuous enrichment of human life and its direction towards an ever closer and deeper understanding of those enduring spiritual values upon which any free, positive, and progressive society must be established . . .

'The function of education in a democracy is the development, training, and enrichment of the human personality. The educational system is the machinery whereby this function is carried out. Since this system is for the benefit of all it should belong to all and be provided by all. Education in a democracy must be, as Dr. H. G. Stead has put it, "of the community, by the community, for the community".'

Now apart from that 'self-orientated' (which gives an odd twist to the slogan 'education of the community, by the community') there is no single statement from which one could decently dissent. But the passage as a whole—and there is much more like it—is politician's English; it deals in hypnotic abstractions which may mean much or little according as they are or are not informed with a feeling for values which will show itself, if at all, in the handling of specific questions. How to give substance to the abstractions—'enduring spiritual values', 'ample and fruitful personal lives' and so on—is the educationalist's essential task. Certainly we shall not obtain the reality merely by invoking the names.

It is therefore of special significance that those parts of Mr. Dent's book most likely to evoke approving nods are isolated generalizations (as when he remarks that 'a national system of education has two vital functions to perform: a tradition-preserving function and a growth-facilitating function'), or proposals for changes in structure and organization. Many of the latter are in themselves desirable; but essential form is determined by content, and the glimpses we have of Mr. Dent's conception of content suggest that something fundamental is lacking. In the following passage he is discussing the type of education to be offered in the senior (preferably 'multilateral') school to which all boys and girls should go from about 13 to 16—after the primary school and before any kind of vocational training:

'As the special aptitudes and interests of each child become increasingly evident, so his education should be gradually specialized, while retaining in every case a nucleus common to all. This nucleus should include physical education, practice in the use of the mother tongue, simple outlines of history, geography, and general science, and education of the emotional and aesthetic capacities through literature, art, music, and drama. It must include, too, the imparting to the child of sufficient knowledge to enable him to appreciate the fact that there is a religious inter-

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pretation of life, and that upon this interpretation much that is of value in Western civilization is based'.

I said just now that Mr. Dent sometimes lapsed into politician's English: here the politician is Lib-Lab. 'The emotional and aesthetic capacities' is just a bow in the direction of 'culture', that 'literary culture of an always numerically tiny minority' of which Mr. Dent has already spoken with distaste.[1] There is no suggestion whatever that the education of the emotions, and of the intelligence, is inseparable from 'practice in the use of the mother tongue', if this means anything more than simple training in a limited kind of skill; nor is there any recognition that what we should be concerned with here is a training, appropriate to the capacities of individual adolescents, to recognize and respond to specific values—a training which begins with words and their uses and which should ultimately lead (since we are speaking of ideals) to an ability to make freely and responsibly those acts of choice on which the quality of individual living depends. Nothing can take the place of that; and 'abundant practice in the art of citizenship', which Mr. Dent recommends, may only distract. (Perhaps I should add that I myself see no incompatibility between the claims of essential human education and of specific education, at the appropriate stage, for a particular kind of job).

A further observation is prompted by a passage in Mr. Dent's chapter on the education of the adult.

> 'Another reform urgently needed is the incorporation as constituent colleges of the universities of the leading technical, art, and commercial colleges; or, since the country is still short of universities and would be even more so were entry broadened as I have suggested, the elevation of these institutions to university rank'.

It is 'the deplorably low status', not the quality, of these institutions that Mr. Dent is bothered about. Merely to secure their 'elevation to university rank' would only lead to that progressive debasement of standards which results, as Matthew Arnold used to remark, when you have the great name without the great thing. And in view of some developments in the modern universities of this country and America such advocacy seems superfluous.

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[1] 'The prestige of the academic curriculum . . . has led us to hold unquestioningly the pernicious theory that a "general" education must be conceived exclusively in terms of the literary culture of an always numerically tiny minority, and has infected us with a morbid dread . . . of incorporating in the curriculum of our elementary and secondary schools and our universities anything which might be thought to be even remotely connected with the degrading business of earning a living' (p. 30).

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It is this lack of concern for *quality* that makes the book not merely representative but portentous. Mr. Dent tells us that 'the only possible starting-point' for educational reform is the question, 'What sort of an educational system do we require to meet the needs of a society which aims to become a full democracy?' An even prior question is, What do we mean by democracy? Dr. Gilbert Murray has recently defined one current conception:

> 'To it the basic principle of democracy seems to be that all men are equal, one just as good as another; one man one vote is the system; everyone votes for what he wants, and whatever the majority votes for is right. If they prefer drink, tobacco, and the dogs to education or freedom; if they put the "bitch-goddess Success" before all other goddesses; well, that is the people's will, and there it is. To protest against it is anti-democratic and high-brow and smacks of the Old School Tie'. (The *Observer*, February 21, 1943).

Mr. Dent would rightly protest that his vision of the 'century of the common man' is very different from that; but whatever his intentions his book will certainly be read with approval by those 'democratic' reformers to whom any concern for quality, and the consequent recognition of distinction, seems repulsively undemocratic. An urgent problem—one of the fundamental problems of our time—is how to combine 'the democratic ideal—full and equal opportunity for all' with that loyalty to what is genuinely superior which aristocratic societies have in the past—with more or less of truth—claimed as their justification. Without that freely given loyalty to something other than the common self of the common man civilization decays. The implications in the educational field are—or should be—obvious.

* * * *

Urgently needed changes in the structure and organization of the educational system are largely a matter for political and administrative action backed by public opinion. But it seems that any attempt to give new directions to the *content* of education as a whole must start from the universities, not merely because it is at the universities that future teachers are trained. It is therefore relevant to call attention to Dr. Löwe's *The Universities in Transformation* (1940).[2]

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[2]It is regrettable that we have not been able to publish a full review of this and other books at an earlier date. So much is being written, as well as talked, about education after the war that only a very lengthy review could attempt to sort out and evaluate the different proposals. War-time difficulties have so far made this impossible, and until a more comprehensive survey can be prepared we must confine ourselves to comment on sufficiently representative work that comes the way of one or another of our contributors.—The Editors.

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Believing that there is at present an irresistible trend towards social planning Dr. Löwe foresees that society will need more and more 'enlightened experts' who will form, at different levels, 'the centres of social responsibility'; the universities must train this 'democratic ruling class'. Dr. Löwe's conception of a 'new intellectual élite' is open to some serious objections, but it is clear that whatever the form of society in the future an élite of some kind there will have to be if civilization is not to lose its meaning. The democratic position is not to deny the need for an élite but to insist that it is genuinely founded on merit—not on heredity, money, or influence within a political group. The universities' rôle, in general terms, is to create a class of men and women who will be responsible for the continuity and development of civilization. More specifically (and here we need not hesitate to accept Dr. Löwe's formulation), their task

> 'is one of discovering a method of specialization which makes vocational study grow out of the understanding and experience of the cultural process as a whole . . . Our true concern must be with a new *cultural* education which is both to balance and to underpin vocational education'.

How far our universities are at present from fulfilling their function thus conceived Dr. Löwe makes clear. His proposals for a radical reorganization of university education (like his case concerning the modern universities) will not be entirely unfamiliar to readers of this review and, since the book is short and should be read, there is no need to summarize them in detail. They centre on the attempt to combine vocational and specialized training with essential humane education; with, that is, training in those interpretative techniques by means of which the student can obtain some insight into the pattern of his civilization as a whole and, simultaneously, with the training of the individual's powers of discrimination and judgment without which 'interpretation' is useless if not impossible. Any such attempt will necessarily involve a major break with the established ordering of the curriculum in specialized subjects and big changes in the established methods of teaching and examining. Dr. Löwe is not rosily optimistic ('It may well be necessary', he says, 'first to educate a new generation of university teachers before real headway can be made'), but he does offer some practical suggestions of how a start might be made. To those who are profoundly dissatisfied with much of the current talk about 'education for democracy'—not because they do not believe in democracy but because they believe in education—his book may be recommended as a spur to thought.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

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HARDY AND CRITICISM

THOMAS HARDY (*English Men of Letters*), *by Edmund Blunden* (*Macmillan*, 7/6).

HARDY THE NOVELIST, by Lord David Cecil (*Constable*, 7/6).

THE SOUTHERN REVIEW, THOMAS HARDY CENTENNIAL ISSUE, Summer 1940 (75c.).

> ' "No, I think I shall do much better to be allusive and charming and rather subtle, you know the sort of thing, and tender. I think one ought always to *see* a book before one starts it. Well, I see this rather like a portrait by Van Dyck, with a good deal of atmosphere, you know, and a certain gravity, and with a sort of aristocratic distinction. Do you know what I mean? About eighty thousand words".
>
> 'He was absorbed for a moment in the ecstasy of aesthetic contemplation. In his mind's eye he saw a book, in royal octavo, slim and light in the hand, printed with large margins on handsome paper in a type that was both clear and comely, and I think he saw a binding in smooth black cloth with a decoration in gold and gilt lettering'.

So the man of letters in Mr. Somerset Maugham's little masterpiece, *Cakes and Ale*, explains his intention of writing a critical biography of that novelist whose works so curiously resemble those of Thomas Hardy. And now (though of course you can't have large margins in war-time) the thing has been done, or at least one cannot avoid the suspicion that when Lord David Cecil was invited to give the Clark Lectures at Cambridge he started with very nearly that intention. No one can suppose he was impelled by a sense of urgent critical work to be done. Take a fair specimen:

> 'Hardy's books do not always end thus on a crashing major chord. He is also master of the dying fall, the Miltonic close in calm of mind, all passion spent, the fading echoing music that, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory. *Under the Greenwood Tree* presents us with an example'.

This is the kind of prose in which much of *Hardy the Novelist* is written. I should have thought that to anyone it was obviously a style in which literary criticism cannot be conveyed; it is certainly a style which undergraduates are discouraged from using in their first term at the university to which these lectures were addressed. Yet the publisher informs us that 'The aim of this book is—while taking advantage of the greater extent of modern knowledge—to return to the true critical path'. And besides its sub-title, 'An Essay in Criticism', there is an opening section explaining how all criticism is wrong which is not purely aesthetic. It is solely the critic's func-

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tion, we are told, 'to illuminate our appreciation of them (books), to define the nature of the satisfaction they give, to analyse the circumstances conditioning their production and the arts by which they make their impression'. Lord David makes it clear that he intends this to be understood in the narrowest sense.

Those interested in the criticism of novels—or perhaps in this connection one should say of The Novel, for to the aesthete the Novel, the Epic, the Lyric, are profitable abstractions—will recollect that the doyen of this school of novel-critics was Mr. Percy Lubbock with his *Craft of Fiction*. I must say that I have never been able to see that the *Craft of Fiction* approach to novels ever justifies itself, and it seems a criticism of this method that it produces in all the instances I have seen only a succession of commonplace observations put across in fine writing at tiresome length, and that when the aesthetic critic tries to go further he dries up in a desert of meaningless phrases such as shallow modelling, narrative and visual art, and unreal distinctions between form and content, and even sets up such concepts as the Comic Spirit and tragic feeling to be permanent stumbling-blocks in the way of the young. It is not thus that criticism can come to grips with a work of art. In fact, the conclusions that the approach Lord David favours provides, seem to have little connection with the experience of the sensitive reader—*e.g.* he says *'Under the Greenwood Tree* is one of Hardy's most faultless works', whereas the facetious tone of the book and its being made entirely out of Hardy's comic-relief material without anything to be relieved, anything (that is) which comes from the deeper and more vital sources of his experiences and interests, must strike any critical reader, I should have thought, and mark it as the novel in the canon (excluding the hopeless failures such as *The Well-Beloved*) least likely ever to be noted for re-reading. Again, 'No one describes love more impressively than Hardy . . .' I should have thought no one did less so in his novels, for it is a mere counter and convention in all Hardy's, being one of three stock varieties—either the grand-passion convention, or the faithful love of the worthy man or woman, or the philandering motions executed by the other sort. No, to be a critic it is necessary to bring more pressure to bear on the undertaking than the aesthete can; he is a lay fellow: without bothering to verify he slaps down his first impressions, and doesn't notice whether he is expressing conventional judgments or contradictions or other people's ideas misunderstood, or what mess of clichés, fine writing and empty phrases he is making on the paper. In so far as the method may have an incidental usefulness when properly practised, it is felt to be impertinent, for what can it do at best but point to the mechanism of a novel?—the part played by the characters in forwarding the plot and the part played by the plot in shaping the work of art, where is the author's viewpoint and mouthpiece, which parts of the narrative are dramatic or descriptive and why, and similar pieces of elementary surface observation, the kind of thing any intelligent reader can and should do for himself at second reading if

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he hasn't mechanically done so during the first. If he cannot do it for himself he cannot be said to read at all. I don't see how Lord David can think he has fulfilled a mission by telling a university audience:

> 'The creative gift, the power to apprehend his material aesthetically, he possessed in the highest degree; but, for complete success a writer cannot rely on the aesthetic qualities alone. He must know how to present his imaginative conceptions to best advantage. Hardy was a great artist, but not a great craftsman'.
>
> 'I must repeat—Hardy's novels are visual novels. It is in his ability to make us "see" that his greatest strength lies . . . Hardy's creative power also shows itself in his characters . . .'

Lord David in short violates the first law of literary criticism, whether aesthetic or otherwise, which is, that when you haven't anything to say, don't say it.

As a revelation of the pretensions of the lecturer I should like to make one more quotation:

> 'Indeed, it is the inevitable defect of a spontaneous genius like Hardy's that it is impervious to education. No amount of painstaking study got him within sight of achieving that intuitive good taste, that instinctive grasp of the laws of literature, which is the native heritage of one bred from childhood in the atmosphere of a high culture'.

Hardy, we may justly reply, had a good Victorian education, was further equipped in the special arts and crafts of music and architecture, was generally well read and thoroughly understood what he read, as his notebooks show, had a remarkably acute grasp of literary theory and a most intelligent response to its practice;[1] that if his style was often bad in the sense of being gauche, pedantic and so on, it was at least his own style and succeeded in expressing something real and personal; and that he had a heritage more valuable than that of 'one bred from childhood in the atmosphere of a high culture' (whatever that may be, for the implication that Hardy's cultural milieu was a low one is preposterous).

I am not carping because I disagree with Lord David's valuation of Hardy the novelist, in fact it would be hard to do so because his book leaks all kinds of opinions and ideas that have been current about Hardy and his novels, without any attempt to distinguish critically or to formulate them incisively so that anyone

[1] *e.g.* in 1883 he remarked of Mark Twain 'Why don't people understand that Mark Twain is not merely a great humourist? He's a very remarkable fellow in a very different way' and specified *Life on the Mississippi*. His notebooks, quoted by Florence Hardy in the two volumes of her husband's life, show a constant preoccupation with the theory and practice of novel-writing, and a very critical response to reviews of his works.

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else may. I am registering a protest against his critical theory and practice. When Mr. Somerset Maugham (to whom we may turn to take the taste of elegant aestheticism out of our mouths) writes of his fictitious novelist:

> 'He was for long thought to write very bad English, and indeed he gave you the impression of writing with the stub of a blunt pencil; his style was laboured, an uneasy mixture of the classical and the slangy, and his dialogue was such as could never have issued from the mouth of a human being . . . His prime belonged to a period when the purple patch was in vogue, and there are descriptive passage in his works that have found their way into all the anthologies of English prose . . . It should be a mortification to me that I cannot read them without discomfort . . . My own heart sank when he led me into the forecastle of a ship or the taproom of a public-house, and I knew I was in for half-a-dozen pages of facetious comment on life, ethics, and immortality. But, I admit, I have always thought the Shakespearean clowns tedious, and their innumerable progeny insupportable . . . His women hardly come to life. But here again I must add that this is only my own opinion; the world at large and the most eminent critics have agreed that they are very winsome types of English womanhood, spirited, gallant, high-souled, and they have been often compared with the heroines of Shakespeare. We know of course that women are habitually constipated, but to represent them in fiction as being altogether devoid of a back passage seems to me really an excess of chivalry. I am surprised that they should care to see themselves thus limned'. (*Cakes and Ale*).

—then, though as it stands it is not literary criticism (neither is Lord David's[2]), yet it presents incisively a critical attitude, and a response to certain elements in the work that cannot be ignored by the critic, and is therefore useful, as good sense and first-hand judgment always are. When one of the contributors to the Hardy Centennial number of the *Southern Review* writes:

> 'Only the disenchanted sophomore can be deeply impressed by Hardy's view of life. Although it was an outcome of the new scientific views, it now seems like a simple variant of supernaturalism . . . . And although Hardy properly objected to treating his fiction as a "scientific system of philosophy", the trouble is that he often wrote as if it were. The scheme of his novels is typically all too rigid and diagrammatic, their argument all too formal and explicit . . . The serious objection, at any rate, is not to his philosophy *per se*, the dismal generalizations he

[2]I should perhaps in fairness add that the *Times Literary Supplement* however describes *Hardy the Novelist* as 'criticism of the first rank', 'a wise and gracious book'.

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illogically induces from the extraordinary actions he invents. It is to his artistry, the inventions themselves'.

—then one sees that critical argument is being advanced by someone with a central grasp of the subject. In this case, the critic (Herbert J. Muller, 'The Novels of Hardy Today') is actually citing the serious faults of his subject before disposing of these objections by advancing his own account of the greatness of Hardy the novelist. I mention this in order to make it clear that I do not object to some people's criticism of Hardy because I disagree with their verdict, like the supervisor who failed a paper I once produced on Shelley because she admired that poet so fervently that no adverse criticism of *Prometheus Unbound,* however plausibly argued and substantially supported, could be allowed merit. I am merely expressing a preference for criticism that comes from some kind of a mind, instead of no kind.

Hardy criticism has even in our time passed through several phases. To his contemporaries, as Mr. Edmund Blunden abundantly demonstrates in his volume on Hardy in the English Men of Letters series, he was just another Victorian novelist. They were not deep enough in the machine age to ecstasize over the glimpses of pastoral England his novels afford, and they had enough good models current in fiction to recognize how awkward his style was, how limited his conception of characterization, and (when they were not, as with the last novels, provoked by his moral unconventionality) the imperfect relation between the moral feeling and the fable he found for embodying it. One can sympathize with the Saturday Reviewer who complained of *Tess* that 'Few people would deny the terrible dreariness of this tale, which, except during a few hours spent with the cows, has not a gleam of sunshine anywhere'. One sees what he meant about the gratuitous nature of the tragic action, and is grateful for the degrading of the dairy-idyll passages to 'a few hours spent among the cows', when so much since has been written rapturously about the novel largely on the strength of those descriptions.

The next phase, recognizing Hardy both as a beautiful writer of descriptive passages about rural England and as a creator of Sophoclean tragedy, came about I suppose when the knowledge of writers like George Eliot and Richard Jefferies faded. With Meredith, the then current comparison, he could of course only be compared to his advantage in every respect. In *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study* by Lascelles Abercrombie (1912) this very solemn acceptance of Hardy's novels is well expressed. If you want an analytic account of Hardy's novels in such terms, this remains the best work of the kind, unencumbered by other material (if you ignore the account of the poems and *The Dynasts*). Lionel Johnson's six essays, *The Art of Thomas Hardy* (1892) is in the same direction, but too pervaded by Lionel Johnson.

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It was Hardy himself who claimed for his novels an Aeschylean intention and a Sophoclean unity and grandeur. But even examination papers have ceased on the whole to demand comparisons between *Tess* (and the other 'great' tragic novels) and Greek Tragedy. A more sober rate of admiration has been given to the Hardy novels since, for there have been exasperated debunking efforts by unsympathetic writers with quite other kinds of demands from fiction (such as Mr. Somerset Maugham), and the growing acceptance of the greater art of Conrad and Henry James, who unlike Hardy are in no respect shown up by time as old-fashioned, has probably helped to put the Hardy novels in juster perspective.[3] It would be well if it were recognized that the novelist who can be most profitably employed for 'placing' Hardy is George Eliot, from whom he derives (Lord David couples him with Scott and the academic world with Meredith); a useful critical exercise is to recommend for reading *Silas Marner* after *Under the Greenwood Tree.*

George Eliot in her novels and stories (except *Romola*) shows a corresponding seriousness of outlook and purpose embodied in similar fictional forms, but, it seems to me, she excels Hardy in every respect. She is the finer artist with wider capacities, the sounder thinker in her account of the relation of man to environment, people to the community, and personalities to each other, the wiser moralist, the more efficient writer, and gives us a more interesting and sensitive apprehension of character. She is equally sincere without being so simple. She has a vein of wit whereas he has only rustic humour, and her irony is real where his is merely the tragic brand. And though she too is saddened she is not morbid. But Hardy's superior appeal has lain in something like morbidity combined with the overpoweringly dramatic impression left by his conceptions. It is a fact that his novels have for at least a generation provided something that no other body of work could or at any rate did. In spite of the critic whom I have quoted as saying that 'only the disenchanted sophomore can be deeply impressed by Hardy's view of life', there is always a generation of such readers, and few people can re-examine dispassionately writings which have impressed them deeply at so critical a stage in their emotional development. Mr. E. L. Woodward the Oxford historian in his most interesting biography *Short Journey* (Faber, 1942) is representative when he writes: 'During my last year at school and my first two years at Oxford, the poems and novels of Thomas Hardy influenced my mind far more than the work of any other English writer . . . The book (*Tess*) moved me so deeply that I could not read more than a chapter at a time . . . So I read on until I had come to the end of everything which Hardy had published. I have read these novels and poems over and over again. They are part of my life'. Whether some other novelist will

[3]One contributor to the *Southern Review* remarks that he wouldn't have known Hardy to be a great novelist if he hadn't been told.

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ever replace Hardy for this purpose is a matter for speculation. But we need not speculate on the ultimate effect of reading Hardy at any phase of development. We can only be grateful for having a body of fiction that proceeds from so honest, worthy and compassionate a nature, so sensitive to human misery and so powerful to record its distresses at the spectacle of suffering, so disinterested, unworldly and unfailingly tender.

Mr. Edmund Blunden's biography is an index of current judgment. He is extremely cautious of making high claims, confines himself in the critical field to countering adverse criticism of the less radical kind, and gives a surprising proportion of his book to extracts from the contemporary reviews. While conveying the peculiarities of Hardy's character as it appeared in old age, with some interesting reminiscences by men of letters of the impression his personality made on them, he does not give us the essential anecdotes and reminiscences about Hardy's youth which provide a clue in his morbid sensitiveness to suffering or even the appearance of it in nature (such as his weeping at seeing the leaves fall). Perhaps he wished to avoid overlapping with Mrs. Hardy's *Early Life* and *Later Life of Thomas Hardy*, which remain indispensable, although written in the most unfortunate style of standard biography. Nobody tells us the facts, which are only vaguely known, about his emotional history and its reactions on his writings—for instance the estrangement from his first wife which produced the attacks on marriage and the marriage-laws in his writings at that time (*Jude, The Woodlanders*). The really useful critical biography of Hardy has not yet been written. But in a quiet way, and leaving the reader to read between the lines, Mr. Blunden has gone some way towards producing it.

As a start there are some stimulating and constructive essays in Hardy criticism in the Hardy centenary issue of an American periodical I have referred to, nearly all by Americans. Some of the contributions are, inevitably, academic in the derogatory sense, but, to point out the live wood, I should like to specify Mr. Zabel's 'Hardy in Defense of his Art: The Aesthetic of Incongruity' (perhaps I am biassed by his specifying the *Scrutiny* evaluation of Hardy in June 1934 as still one of the best essays written on the novels); the valuable analysis of '*Jude the Obscure* as a Tragedy' by Arthur Mizener—such a really fundamental analysis of one novel done with intelligence and critical method, and by someone in possession of a great deal of parallel information about Hardy's mentality and outlook, is more illuminating than a library of 'aesthetic' flounderings; and the final essay on 'The Novels of Hardy Today' by Herbert J. Muller. These really are essays in criticism which it would be enlightening instead of insulting to present to a university audience. One is glad too to have a spirited, able and critically demolishing essay by the distinguished short-story writer Miss Katherine Anne Porter, 'Notes on a Criticism of Thomas Hardy', in reply to the outrageous account of Hardy's work in *After*

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Strange Gods. One understands why Henry James in a letter about *Tess* permits himself to refer to Hardy the novelist as 'the good little Thomas Hardy'—he was in a position to employ the patronising 'little', though we aren't, and the attribution of innocence and moral worth in the combined adjectives is just right in contrast to Mr. Eliot's criticism of the novelist, which could hardly be more wrong in tone, intention and expression. There are also a number of essays on Hardy's poems in the memorial number of this periodical, but I have been concerned here with the criticism of Hardy's fiction. What really warms one heart is the complete absence of the belle-tristic approach or of any aesthetic posturing, in this collective enterprise. Could one believe that any similar undertaking on this side of the Atlantic, even before the War, would have been so profitable or even harmless? It is certainly the most helpful critical work on Hardy I know, and since the best essays in it are by tough-minded critics with a corresponding tightness of argument and idiom, who raise many debatable critical problems, it could be recommended for teething purposes at the university. Unfortunately the *Southern Review* has become a war fatality, and back numbers are probably unobtainable.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

CURRENT PAMPHLETEERING

FRANCE, by Pierre Millaud (Oxford University Press, 3/6).

In a recent *New Statesman* Mr. George Orwell examined the present vogue for pamphlets. He came to the conclusion that, on the whole, it has produced a dull lot, much inferior to similar productions of the past. I do not claim to have made a study of modern pamphleteering, I merely offer a few observations, based on those pamphlets with which I have recently come in contact, by way of introduction to my recommendation of what I consider to be a notable example of this type of writing. I am not going to define a pamphlet; most modern books of about 100 pages or less can be called pamphlets, some historical pamphlets run to several hundred pages. There is a big difference between the pamphlets of the last few years and those we know from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which makes comparisons inappropriate. Those older pamphlets that are still of intrinsic interest to us were contributions to political and religious controversy among the cultivated. A body of common knowledge and values could be assumed. In Nashe in his own way, in Milton, Dryden and Marvell journalism and literature merge. However wide a public was reached the coffee house remained the essential milieu. There have been distinguished pamphlets in our time: *Pornography and Obscenity*, the publications of the Minority Press, but the great bulk of modern journalism of this less ephemeral kind is intended to give information. If we want a parallel to it in the past we must go to the less bulky material

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described by Mr. Louis B. Wright in *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, or to Defoe's obscurer works.

Oxford Pamphlets, Macmillan Pamphlets, Chatham House publications, *The Democratic Order* series, *Current Problems, The World To-day*, etc., are doing the work that one might expect to be done by periodical journalism. They provide the facts about the world around him, and discussion of their implications, which should be the basic mental diet of any democratic citizen. I do not know whether it could be asserted that these productions have increased in number as amalgamation and financial extremity have thinned the ranks of the daily and weekly press. If so, it would suggest that public intelligence in this country is less dissipated than the organizers of our modern festival on the Fleet have wittingly desired or unwittingly believed. More probably the paper control authorities could explain this mainly wartime florescence; presumably the total area of all our pamphlets is considerably less than that of the newsprint required to enlarge a national daily newspaper, or even a weekly review, by one page for quite a short period. I'm not suggesting that 'they' are deliberately restricting the diffusion of ideas. It certainly is restricted, however, for a very feeble trickle of this kind of writing finds its way through the present bottleneck in book distribution. The purposes of authors and publishers are, I fear, to a large extent defeated.

Though a number of authoritative names appear on their covers, I have not come across any wartime pamphlets that are likely to outlast current discussion. The episcopal *Penguins* are not going to take their places with *An Apology for Smectymnuus*. The *Searchlight Books* don't penetrate far into the Cimmerian gloom. Mr. Spender peers through the Marxist fog to a more objective vision of literature. Mr. Olaf Stapledon gropes *Beyond the 'Isms* to an affirmation of faith in 'the spirit, the spirit, the spirit', while offering belief attitudes to console the weaker brethren. In fact cultural matters get very dull treatment in most of these essays. Sir Richard Livingstone in *The Future of Education* (Current Problems, C.U.P., 3/6) makes some trenchant criticisms of our chaotic curricula and offers interesting general suggestions based on the Peoples' High Schools of Denmark, but his particular literary proposals are either academic: memorisation of 'purple patches' from Victorian authors, or merely vulgar: 'Literature is a railway ticket . . . a pass to the greatest of waxwork exhibitions, where every waxwork is made of flesh and blood'.

M. Pierre Millaud's *France* belongs to a superior category to any of these. He assumes a serious interest in affairs on the part of his readers and a general awareness of the arts. At several places one can imagine a scratching of Cibberian foreheads—and remember that Cibber was a popular literary figure. M. Millaud does not deal in the by now familiar journalist explanations of the fall of France, 'the relationship between a French Prime Minister and a woman in French society', financial corruption, etc. 'Any community will

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supply an assortment of Staviskys, but a healthy nation will break them.' He analyses the history of France with remarkable care within his 120 odd pages. In dealing with events between the two wars he diagnoses the fundamental weakness of the French nation: her smaller population as compared with Germany's, her balanced industrial/agricultural economy which meant that there were too many people dependent on the land, and therefore needing special treatment, while industry was not adequately co-ordinated, and finally the lack of contact between French political life and the real social and economic problems of the country which led to a collapse of confidence in the parliamentary system. He has the historian's gifts of penetration and generalisation. He mentions few names and few actual events yet one feels all the time that he is dealing with concrete history. His summings up are often masterly, as when he says that at bottom Germany is for France an unstable and 'dangerous biological problem'. His survey of literature is discriminatingly inclusive; he seems to me to do less than justice to the French cinema by comparing its productions to two of the very few non-European films which stand comparison with them anyway, but this is a sign of his high standards. M. Millaud may complain that his countrymen are politically highly strung and not really capable of considering large economic problems. The fact remains that one rarely comes across in England such concise, serious, disinterested and, in the best sense, patriotic writing. He sets a standard in these pamphlets on world affairs. He both gives information and opens numerous fundamental political arguments, and his book should encourage appreciation of the French international viewpoint. In discussing France's mission he is thinking in terms of Western civilization in the wide sense. When he refers to France and Britain as the trustees of European culture one feels embarrassed; we rarely think of national policy on a higher plane than the political and social.

One wonders what effect M. Millaud's essay and the other publications discussed above will have. They are part of an educational movement, which, in spite of the intention, one hesitates as yet to call popular. Interest in political and economic questions seems to be growing—in a general atmosphere of scepticism. Whether the demand is strong enough to affect the popular press after the war remains to be seen. Shall we plan anything but an enormous Middletown? Our Left Wing intellectuals still seem to be where they were in the 'thirties, and presumably the Penguin public takes its cue from them. The genuine creative writers of the age are getting known but is there any discrimination between them and the others? Perhaps we should take some comfort from the wide sale of Mr. Eliot's later poems and from Mr. E. M. Forster's apparent succession to Sir Hugh Walpole as doyen of the literary world. Yet the dunces are far stronger than in the Augustan Age.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

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